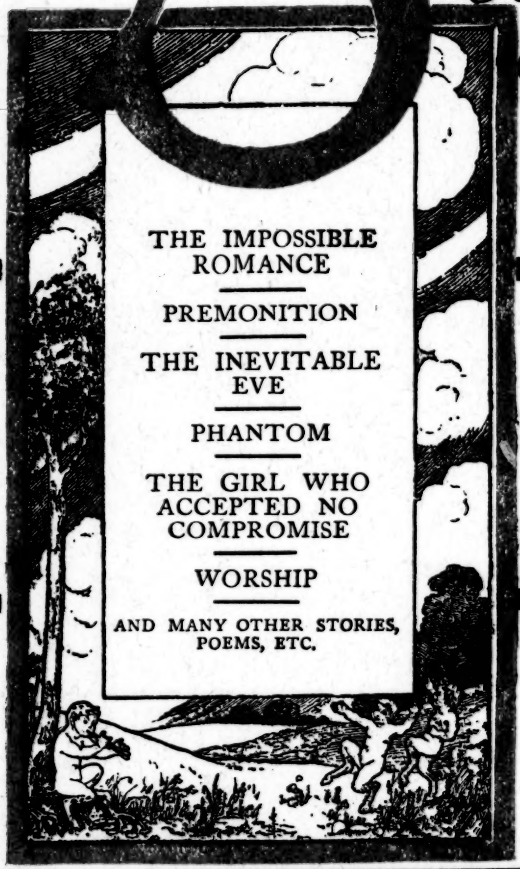
THE SMART SET

A Magazine of Cleverness

To Amuse. Not to Instruct



THE IMPOSSIBLE ROMANCE

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THE SMART SET

A MAGAZINE OF CLEVERNESS

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Editor—J. W. MILNE

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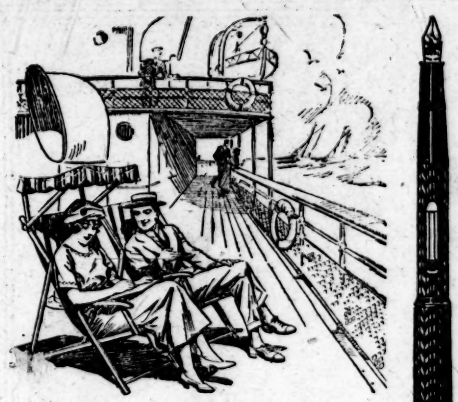

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The Downfall

(The Terrible Peace has seen perpetuated a type which flourished during the Great War, the Snobureaucrat. This curious creature's chief characteristics are a tendency to talk of "our set," and a profound contempt for "trade" which characteristics obviously fit him to control the commerce of the country. By no means unmindful of the loaves and fishes, he is feeling the shortage, and appeals to the despised Merchant for more money. The Merchant answers him.)

THE MERCHANT.

Signor Snoburio, many a time and oft
In your snob circles have you rated me,
About my "business," monies, usances,
Still have I borne it with a patient shrug:
For tolerance is the badge of all my tribe.
You call me "quite impossible!" "vulgar dog!"
And sneer at dull, productive work,
And all for doing which you cannot do.
Well then, it now appears you need my help:
Go to, then: you come to me and you say,
"Merchant, we would have monies"—you say so;
You, that did vent your spleen upon my "trade"
And ban me as you'd ban a noisome thing
From out "*our* circles"—monies is your suit,
What should I say to you? Should I say
"Have 'bounders' money? Is it possible
A 'vulgar trader' has these sums to lend?
A 'course commercial' find these millions?"
Shall I bend low, and in a bondman's key
With bated breath, adoring humbleness
Say this:
"Kind sir, for all these courtesies
I'll lend you thus much monies?"

SNOBURIO.

I am as like to treat thee so again,
If thou will lend this money.
Lend it not as to thy friends,
But lend it rather to thine enemy.

THE MERCHANT.

I stand for judgment. Is it just that I should lend *more* monies to my enemy—a bankrupt, a prodigal, who dare scarce show his head; a beggar that was used to come so smug upon the mart? You have disgraced me and hindered my millions; laughed at my losses, mocked at my gains, scorned my "trade," thwarted my bargains, cooled my friends, heated my enemies; and what's your reason? Hath not a producer hands, organs, dimensions, sense, foresight, intelligence, creative instincts? Is he not fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means as a Snobureaucrat? If you "bleed" us do we not suffer, if you ruin us do we not cease to produce, and if you wrong us shall we not revenge? At least we will be like you in that. If a Producer wrong a Snobureaucrat what is his humility? Revenge. If a Snobureaucrat wrong a Producer what should his sufferance be by Snob example? Why, revenge. The villainy you teach me I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction.

* * * * * * * * * *

Britain is being run for the benefit of the Bureaumaniacs, the Megolomaniacs, and the Squandermaniacs.

These parasites are crushing the life out of the commercial community by iniquitous and unbearable taxation in order that they may pursue their course of mad adventures and imbecile extravagancies. The Merchants must arrest the casting of their money into the melting pot, and administer their vengence on the culprits before it is too late.

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E PLURIBUS UNUM

By Lucy Jeanne Price

MADELAINE HARKAWAY SMITH insisted upon being a radical—an iconoclast—a martyr. She was determined to stand out against the great hordes of smug, satisfied, comfortable citizens and show that there was one woman in this fastly degenerating world who dared, who was willing to suffer ostracism—anything—for the things she believed and the things which would eventually redeem the race.

She had a vision of herself standing on a high hill, straight against the cold blue sky, tall and slim and heroic, and —of course—alone.

The fact that she was a bit too plump and rounded to stand quite so tall and straight and severe of silhouette happily did not occur to her.

Anyway she was bound to rebel. Against what? Against everything. For everything stood for what was Pharisaic and comfortable.

And so Madelaine Harkaway Smith deserted the ranks of her dancing friends, who, as she scornfully muttered to herself, were fiddling while Rome was burning.

She joined the Socialists. She didn't stop at the drawing-room kind. She delved into the heart of things and went to meetings in smoky halls and wore a red button.

It was a disappointment. There was not enough rebellion in it and too much economics. They talked of history, too, at the meetings. And what is history but the hypocritical record of a dead and selfish past?

Moreover she certainly did not seem to be standing alone. There were throngs of Socialists apparently. They appeared everywhere one went. Even in the respectable drawing-rooms one heard them accepted with no great demonstration of hostility.

That evidently could not be the domain of Madelaine's martyrdom.

And so the woman rebel threw this bomb into a gathering of her Socialist friends, down in the mysterious and rebellious precincts of Washington Square:

"I am through with Socialism. It's all wrong. It's intended to keep a blind people contented. I will *not* be contented. I am an Anarchist."

Those present surveyed the bomb she had hurled at them as though it were a ball of knitting cotton.

"Madelaine, you're a theorist," was the nearest thing to a blazing torch that they applied. And she almost detected a yawn in the voice of him who thus persecuted her.

And so Madelaine became an Anarchist. She threw her head back one hitch farther and bobbed her hair and always wore clothes with pockets she could stick her hands into. She moved from the north of Washington Square to the south and tried to cultivate more rebellion and a touch of bitterness in the lines of her face. She went to the Liberal Club and smoked cigarettes while she was dancing, flicking the ashes over her partner's shoulder. She determined to show the world that there was still one woman who was willing to live her life for the sake of her beliefs and the salvation of her fellow-beings.

She asked defiant questions of the gentle Socialist speakers at Cooper Union meetings and she scorned all systems.

But still she did not seem to be alone. Everywhere there were all sorts of people who belonged to the group with her. Some of them even were fat. And one woman prominent in the anarchistic ranks wore a plaid silk waist with frilling down the centre. Moreover, none of them seemed to realize that in being one at their assemblages, she was a martyr, a creature of heroic cast. They talked to her genially about the sloppiness of the winter this year, and did she have a good job. They were enthusiastic over teaching her new dance steps and they couldn't bear lukewarm coffee.

No one ever even pointed to Madelaine Harkaway Smith on the street except one time to tell her that her pocketbook was open.

She went in for birth control. She would show those people that there were no limits to her bravery—her audacity. And lo and behold, four hundred happy, respectable-looking people turned out at the dinner of the birth controllers. Madelaine got a fair dinner out of it and that was about all.

She picketed with the strikers, and the employers' wives were there ahead of her doing the same thing.

She wrote a scathing poem denouncing Christianity, and it was returned with a polite note saying that it had merit but was too much like seventeen others recently accepted by the editors.

Then she spoke from a soap box in Union Square, a defiant, rebellious speech in which she cried *à bas* to capital law, society, labour unions, marriage, the church, war, peace, socialism, nature, cooked foods and every solution of human ills that had ever been suggested, and she decried and flaunted everyone who had ever offered these solutions.

And no one cried "Crucify her!"

They stopped, listened, moved on, smiled, ignored—gently and politely—and two of them came up afterward and said to her:

"That was a pretty good speech for an amateur. How would you like to give it up in our hall next Sunday afternoon? We have an organization of six hundred and eighty-three people who agree with everything you've just said. And we always have nice, jolly times together after the meetings. Want to come? There'll probably be dancing later on."

And poor Madelaine burst into tears and cried to the nearby taxi driver, "Take me home. You can't stand alone in a world with so many people in it!"

COMING, EDEN BOWER!

By Willa Sibert Cather

CHAPTER I

DON HEDGER had lived for four years on the top floor of an old house on the south side of Washington Square, and nobody had ever disturbed him. He occupied one big room with no outside exposure except on the north, where he had built in a many-paned studio window that looked upon a court and upon the roofs and walls of other buildings.

His room was very cheerless, since he never got a ray of direct sunlight; the south corners were always in shadow. In one of these corners was a clothes closet, built against the partition; in another a wide divan, serving as a seat by day and a bed by night. In the front corner, the one farther from the window, was a sink, and a table with two gas burners, where he sometimes cooked his food. There, too, in the perpetual dusk, was the dog's bed, and often a bone or two for his comfort.

The dog was a Boston bull terrier, and Hedger explained his surly disposition by the fact that he had been bred to the point where it told on his nerves. His name was Cæsar III., and he had taken prizes at very exclusive dog shows. When he and his master went out to prowl about University Place or to promenade along West Street, Cæsar III. was invariably fresh and shining. His pink skin showed through his mottled coat, which glistened as if it had just been rubbed with olive oil, and he wore a brass-studded collar, bought at the smartest saddler's. Hedger, as often as not, was hunched up in an old striped blanket coat, with a shapeless felt hat pulled over his bushy hair, wearing black shoes that had become gray, or brown ones that had become black, and he never put on gloves unless the day was biting cold.

Early in May, Hedger learned that he was to have a new neighbour in the rear apartment—two rooms, one large and one small, that faced the west. His studio was shut off from the larger of these rooms by double doors which, though they were fairly tight, left him a good deal at the mercy of the occupant.

The rooms had been leased, long before he came there, by a trained nurse who considered herself knowing in old furniture. She went to auction sales and bought up mahogany and dirty brass and stored it away here, where she meant to live when she retired from nursing. Meanwhile, she sub-let her rooms, with their precious furniture, to young people who came to New York to write or to paint—who proposed to live by the sweat of the brow rather than of the hand, and who desired artistic surroundings. When Hedger first moved in, these rooms were occupied by a young man who tried to write plays, and who had kept on trying until a week ago, when the nurse had put him out for unpaid rent.

A few days after the playwright left, Hedger heard an ominous murmur of voices through the bolted double doors; the lady-like intonation of the nurse—doubtless exhibiting her treasures—and another voice, also a woman's, but very different; young, fresh, unguarded, confident. All the same, it would be

very annoying to have a woman in there. The only bath-room on the floor was at the top of the stairs in the front hall, and he would always be running into her as he came or went from his bath. He would have to be more careful to see that Cæsar didn't leave bones around the hall, too; and she might object when he cooked steak and onions on his gas burner.

As soon as the talking ceased and the woman left, he forgot them. He was absorbed in a picture of paradise fish at the Aquarium, staring out at people through the glass and green water of their tank. It was a highly gratifying idea; the incommunicability of one stratum of animal life with another—though Hedger pretended it was only an experiment in unusual lighting. When he heard trunks knocking against the sides of the narrow hall, then he realized that she was moving in at once.

Toward noon, groans and deep gasps and the creaking of ropes made him aware that a piano was arriving. After the tramp of the movers died away down the stairs, somebody touched off a few scales and chords on the instrument, and then there was peace. Presently he heard her lock her door and go down the hall humming something; going out to lunch, probably. He stuck his brushes in a can of turpentine and put on his hat, not stopping to wash his hands. Cæsar was smelling along the crack under the bolted doors; his bony tail stuck out hard as a hickory withe and the hair was standing up about his elegant collar.

Hedger encouraged him. "Come along, Cæsar. You'll soon get used to a new aroma."

In the hall stood an enormous trunk, behind the ladder that led to the roof, just opposite Hedger's door. The dog flew at it with a growl of hurt amazement. They went down three flights of stairs and out into the brilliant May afternoon.

Behind the Square, Hedger and his dog descended into a basement oyster house where there were no tablecloths on the tables and no handles on the coffee cups, and the floor was covered with sawdust, and Cæsar was always welcome—not that he needed any such precautionary flooring. All the carpets of Persia would have been safe for him. Hedger ordered steak and onions absent-mindedly, not realizing why he had an apprehension that this dish might be less readily at hand hereafter. While he ate, Cæsar sat beside his chair, gravely disturbing the sawdust with his tail.

After lunch, Hedger strolled about the Square for the dog's health and watched the stages pull out; that was almost the very last summer of the old horse stages on Fifth Avenue. The fountain had but lately begun operations for the season and was throwing up a mist of rainbow water which now and then blew south and sprayed a bunch of Italian babies who were being held up on the outer rim by older, very little older, brothers and sisters. Plump robins were hopping about on the soil; the grass was newly cut and blindingly green. Looking up the Avenue, through the Arch, one could see the young poplars with their fresh, bright, unsmoked leaves, and the Brevoort glistening in its spring coat of paint, and shining horses and carriages—occasionally an automobile, misshapen and sullen, like an ugly threat in a stream of things that were bright and beautiful and alive.

While Cæsar and his master were standing by the fountain, a girl approached them, crossing the Square. Hedger noticed her because she wore a lavender cloth suit and carried in her arms a big bunch of fresh lilacs. He saw that she was young and handsome—beautiful, in fact, with a splendid figure and good action. She, too, paused by the fountain and looked back through the Arch up the Avenue. She smiled rather patronizingly as she looked, and at the same time seemed delighted. Her slowly curving upper lip and half-closed eyes seemed to say:

"You're gay, you're exciting, you are quite the right sort of thing; but you're none too fine for me!"

In the moment she tarried, Cæsar stealthily approached her and sniffed at the hem of her lavender skirt, then, when she went south like an arrow, he ran back to his master and lifted a face full of emotion and alarm, his lower lip twitching under his sharp white teeth and his hazel eyes pointed with a very definite discovery. He stood thus, motionless, while Hedger watched the lavender girl go up the steps and through the door of the house in which he lived.

"You're right, my boy, it's she! She might be worse looking, you know."

When they mounted to the studio, the new lodger's door at the back of the hall was a little ajar, and Hedger caught the warm perfume of lilacs just brought in out of the sun. He was used to the musty smell of the old hall carpet. (The nurse-lessee had once knocked at his studio door and complained that Cæsar must be somewhat responsible for the particular flavour of that mustiness, and Hedger had never spoken to her since.) He was used to the old smell, and he preferred it to that of lilacs, and so did his companion, whose nose was so much more discriminating. Hedger shut his door vehemently, and fell to work.

Most young men who dwell in obscure studios in New York have had a beginning, come out of something, have somewhere a home town, a family, a paternal roof. But Don Hedger had no such background. He was a foundling, and had grown up in a school for homeless boys, where book-learning was a negligible part of the curriculum. When he was sixteen, a Catholic priest took him to Greensburg, Pennsylvania, to keep house for him. The priest did something to fill in the large gaps in the boy's education—taught him to like Don Quixote and The Golden Legend, and encouraged him to mess with paints and crayons in his room up under the slope of the mansard.

When Don wanted to go to New York to study at the Art League, the priest got him a night job as a packer in one of the big department stores. Since then, Hedger had taken care of himself; that was his only responsibility. He was singularly unencumbered; had no family duties, no social ties, no obligations toward anyone but his landlord. Since he travelled light, he had travelled rather far. He had got over a good deal of the earth's surface, in spite of the fact that he never in his life had more than three hundred dollars ahead at any one time, and he had already outlived a succession of convictions and revelations about his art.

Though he was now but twenty-six years old, he had twice been on the verge of becoming a marketable product; once through some studies of New York streets he did for a magazine, and once through a collection of pastels he brought home from New Mexico, which Remington, then a great man in American art, happened to see and generously tried to push. But on both occasions Hedger decided that this was something he didn't wish to carry further—simply the old thing over again and got nowhere—so he took enquiring dealers something in a "later manner," and they put him out of the shop. When he ran short of money he could always get any amount of commercial work because he was an expert draughtsman and worked with lightning speed. The rest of his time he spent in groping his way from one kind of painting into another, or travelling about without luggage, like a tramp, and he was chiefly occupied with getting rid of ideas he had once thought very fine.

Hedger's circumstances, since he had moved to Washington Square, were affluent compared to anything he had ever known before. He was now able to pay advance rent and turn the key on his studio when he went away for four months at a stretch. It didn't occur to him to wish to be richer than this. To be sure, he did without a great many things that other people think necessary, but he didn't miss them because he had never had them. He belonged to no clubs, visited no houses, had no studio friends, and he ate his

dinner alone in some decent little restaurant, even on Christmas and New Years. For days together he talked to nobody but his dog and the janitress and the lame oysterman.

After he shut the door and settled down to his paradise fish on that first Tuesday in May, Hedger forgot all about his new neighbour. When the light failed, he took Cæsar out for a walk. On the way home he did his marketing on West Houston street, with a one-eyed Italian woman he knew. After he had cooked his beans and scallopini, and drunk half a bottle of Chianti, he put his dishes in the sink and went up on the roof to smoke. He was the only person in the house who ever went to the roof, and he had a secret understanding with the janitress about it. He was to have "the privilege of the roof," as she said, if he opened the heavy trapdoor on sunny days to air out the upper hall, and was watchful to close it when rain threatened. Mrs. Foley was fat and dirty and hated to climb stairs—besides, the roof was reached by a perpendicular iron ladder, definitely inaccessible to a woman of her bulk, and the iron door at the top of it was too heavy for any but Hedger's strong arm to lift. Hedger was not above medium height, but he practised with weights and dumbbells and in the shoulders he was as strong as a gorilla.

So Hedger had the roof to himself. He and Cæsar often slept up there on hot nights, rolled in blankets he had brought home from Arizona. He mounted with Cæsar under his left arm. The dog had never learned to climb a perpendicular ladder, and never did he feel so much his master's greatness and his own dependence upon him as when he crept under his arm for this perilous ascent. Up there was even gravel to scratch in, and a dog could do whatever he liked so long as he did not bark. It was a kind of Heaven, which no one was strong enough to reach but his great, paint-smelling master.

On this blue May night there was a slender, girlish-looking young moon in the west, playing with a whole company of silver stars. Now and then one of them darted away from the group and shot off into the gauzy blue with a soft trail of light, like laughter. Hedger and his dog were delighted when a star did this. They were quite lost in watching the glittering game, when they were suddenly diverted by a sound—not from the stars, though it was music. It was not the prologue to "Pagliacci," which rose ever and anon on hot evenings from an Italian tenement on Thompson street, with the gasps of the corpulent baritone who got behind it; nor was it the hurdy-gurdy man, who often played at the corner in the balmy twilight. No, this was a woman's voice, singing the tempestuous, overlapping phrases of Signor Puccini, then comparatively new in the world, but already so popular that even Hedger recognized his unmistakable gusts of breath.

He looked about over the roofs; all was blue and still, with the well-built chimneys that were never used now standing up dark and mournful. He moved softly toward the yellow quadrangle where the gas from the hall shone up through the half-lifted trapdoor. Oh, yes! It came up through the hole like a strong draught, a big, beautiful voice, and it sounded rather like a professional's. A piano had come in the morning, Hedger remembered. This might be a very great nuisance. It would be pleasant enough to listen to if you could turn it on and off as you wished; but you couldn't. Cæsar, with the gas light shining up on his collar and his ugly but sensitive face, panted and looked up for information. Hedger put down a reassuring hand.

"I don't know. We can't tell yet. It may not be so bad."

He stayed on the roof until all was still below, and finally descended with quite a new feeling about his neighbour. Her voice, like her figure, inspired respect—if one did not choose to call it admiration. Her door was shut, the

transom was dark; nothing remained of her but the obtrusive trunk, unrightfully taking up room in the narrow hall.

CHAPTER II

FOR two days Hedger didn't see her. He was painting eight hours a day just then, and only went out to hunt for food. He noticed that she practised scales and exercises for about an hour in the morning. Then she locked her door, went humming down the hall, and left him in peace. He heard her getting her coffee ready at about the same time he got his. Earlier still, she passed his room on her way to her bath. In the evening she sometimes sang, but on the whole she didn't bother him.

When he was working well he did not notice anything much. The morning paper lay before his door until he reached out for his milk bottle, then he kicked the sheet inside and it lay on the floor until evening. Sometimes he read it and sometimes he did not. He forgot there was anything of importance going on in the world outside of his third floor studio. Nobody had ever taught him that he ought to be interested in other people; in the Pittsburgh steel strike, in the Fresh Air Fund, in the scandal about the Babies' Hospital. A gray wolf, living in a Wyoming canyon, would hardly have been less concerned about these things than was Don Hedger.

One morning he was coming out of the bathroom at the front end of the hall, having just given Cæsar his bath and rubbed him into a glow with a heavy towel. Before the door, lying in wait for him as it were, stood a tall figure in a flowing blue silk dressing gown that fell away from her marble arms. In her hands she carried various accessories of the bath.

"I wish," she said distinctly, standing in his way, "I wish you wouldn't wash your dog in the tub. I never heard of such a thing! I've found his hair in the tub, and I've smelled a doggy smell, and now I've caught you at it. It's an outrage!"

Hedger was badly frightened. She was so tall and positive, and was fairly blazing with beauty and anger. He stood blinking, holding on to his sponge and dog-soap, feeling that he ought to bow very low to her. But what he actually said was:

"Nobody has ever objected before. I always wash the tub—and, anyhow, he's cleaner than most people."

"Cleaner than me?" her eyebrows went up, her white arms and neck and her fragrant person seemed to scream at him like a band of outraged nymphs. Something flashed through his mind about a man who was turned into a dog, or was pursued by dogs, because he unwittingly intruded upon the bath of beauty.

"No, I didn't mean that," he muttered, turning scarlet under the bluish stubble of his muscular jaws. "But I know he's cleaner than I am."

"That I don't doubt!" Her voice sounded like a shaft shivering of crystal, and with a smile of pity she drew the folds of her voluminous blue robe against the wall and allowed the wretched man to pass. Even Cæsar was frightened; he darted like a streak down the hall, through the door and to his own bed in the corner among the bones.

Hedger stood still in the doorway, listening to indignant sniffs and coughs and a great swishing of water about the sides of the tub. He had washed it; but as he had washed it with Cæsar's sponge, it was quite possible that a few bristles remained; the dog was shedding now. The playwright had never objected, nor had the jovial illustrator who occupied the front apartment—but he, as he admitted, "was usually pie-eyed, when he wasn't in Buffalo." He went home to Buffalo sometimes to rest his nerves.

It had never occurred to Hedger that anyone would mind using the tub after Cæsar—but then, he had never seen a beautiful girl caparisoned for the bath before. As soon as he beheld her standing there, he realized the unfitness of it. For that matter, she ought not

to step into a tub that any other mortal had bathed in; the illustrator was sloppy and left cigarette ends on the moulding.

All morning as he worked he was gnawed by a spiteful desire to get back at her. It rankled that he had been so vanquished by her disdain. When he heard her locking her door to go out for lunch, he stepped quickly into the hall in his messy painting coat, and addressed her.

"I don't wish to be exigent, Miss"—he had certain grand words that he used upon occasion—"but if this is your trunk, it's rather in the way here."

"Oh, very well!" she exclaimed carelessly, dropping her keys into her handbag. "I'll have it moved when I can get a man to do it," and she went down the hall with her free, roving stride.

Her name, Hedger discovered from her letters, which the postman left on the table in the lower hall, was Eden Bower.

CHAPTER III

In the closet that was built against the partition separating his room from Miss Bower's, Hedger kept all his wearing apparel, some of it on hooks and hangers, some of it on the floor. When he opened his closet door nowadays, little dust-coloured insects flew out on downy wing, and he suspected that a brood of moths were hatching in his winter overcoat. Mrs. Foley, the janitress, told him to bring down all his heavy clothes and she would give them a beating and hang them in the court. The closet was in such disorder that he shunned the encounter, but one hot afternoon he set himself to the task.

First he threw out a pile of forgotten laundry and tied it up in a sheet. The bundle stood as high as his middle when he had knotted the corners. Then he got his shoes and overshoes together. When he took his overcoat from its place against the partition, a long ray of yellow light shot across the dark enclosure, a knothole, evidently in the high wainscoting of the west room. He had never noticed it before and without realizing what he was doing, he stooped and squinted through it.

Yonder, in a pool of sunlight, stood his new neighbour, clad in a pink chiffon cloud of some sort, doing gymnastic exercises before a long gilt mirror. Hedger did not think how unpardonable it was of him to watch her. A woman in negligée was not an improper object to a man who had worked so much from unclad models, and he continued to look simply because, except in old sculpture, he had never seen a human body so beautiful as this one—positively glorious in action. As she swung her arms and changed from one pivot of motion to another, muscular energy seemed to flow through her from her toes to her finger-tips. The soft flush of exercise and the gold of the afternoon sun played over her together, enveloped her in a luminous mist which, as she turned and twisted, made now an arm, now a shoulder, dissolve in pure light and instantly recover its outline with the next gesture.

Hedger's fingers curved as if he were holding a crayon; mentally he was doing the whole figure in a single running line, and the charcoal seemed to explode in his hand at the point where the energy of each gesture was discharged into the whirling disc of light.

He could not have told whether he watched her for six minutes or sixteen. When her gymnastics were over, she paused to catch up a lock of hair that had come down; then, with her hand on her hip, she walked unconcernedly across the room and disappeared through the door into her bedchamber.

Disappeared—Don Hedger was staring at the golden shower which poured in through the west windows, at the lake of gold on the faded Turkish carpet. The spot seemed enchanted; as if a vision out of Alexandria, out of the remote pagan past, had bathed itself there in Helianthine fire.

When he crawled out of his closet he stood blinking at the gray sheet

stuffed with laundry. He felt a little sick as he contemplated the bundle. Everything here was different; he hated the disorder of the place, the gray prison light, his old shoes and himself and all his slovenly habits. The black calico curtains that ran on wires over his big window were white with dust. There were three frying pans in the sink, and the sink itself—. He felt desperate. He couldn't stand this another minute. He took up an armful of winter clothes and ran down four flights into the basement.

"Mrs. Foley," he began, "I want my room cleaned this afternoon, thoroughly cleaned. Can you get a woman for me right away?"

"Is it company you're having?" the fat, dirty janitress inquired.

Mrs. Foley was the widow of a useful Tammany man, and she owned real estate in Flatbush. She was huge and soft as a feather bed. Her face and arms were permanently coated with dust, grained like wood where the perspiration had trickled.

"Yes, company. That's it."

"Well, this is a queer time of the day to be asking for a cleaning woman. It's likely I can get you old Lizzie, if she's not drunk. I'll send Willy round to see."

Willy, the son of fourteen, roused from the stupor and stain of his third box of cigarettes by the gleam of a quarter, went out. In five minutes he returned with old Lizzie—she smelling strong of spirits and wearing several jackets which she had put on one over the other, and a number of skirts, long and short, which made her resemble an animated dish-clout.

She had, of course, to borrow her equipment from Mrs. Foley, and toiled up the long flights, dragging mop and pail and broom. She told Hedger to be of good cheer, for he had got the right woman for the job, and showed him a great leather strap she wore about her wrist to prevent dislocation of tendons. She swished about the place, scattering dust and splashing soapsuds, while he watched her in nervous despair. He stood over Lizzie and made her scour the sink, directing her roughly, then paid her and got rid of her. Shutting the door on his failure, he hurried off with his dog to lose himself among the stevedores and dock labourers on West Street.

A strange chapter began for Don Hedger. Day after day, at that hour in the afternoon, the hour before his neighbour dressed for dinner, he crouched in his closet to watch her go through with her mysterious exercises. It did not occur to him that his conduct was detestable; there was nothing shy or retreating about this girl—and these gymnastics had clearly a public purpose, were a part of her preparation for the stage.

Hedger scarcely regarded his action as conduct at all; it was something that had happened to him. More than once he went out and tried to stay away for the whole afternoon, but at about five o'clock he was sure to find himself among his old shoes in the dark. The pull of that aperture was stronger than his will—and he had always considered his will the strongest thing about him. When she threw herself upon the divan and lay resting, he still stared, holding his breath. His nerves were so on edge that a sudden noise made him start. The dog would come and tug at his sleeve, knowing that something was wrong with his master. If he attempted a mournful whine, those strong hands closed about his throat.

When Hedger came out of his closet, he sat down on the edge of the couch, sat for hours without moving. He was not painting at all now. This thing, whatever it was, drank him up as ideas had sometimes done, and he sank into a stupor of idleness as deep and dark as the stupor of work. He could not understand it; he was no boy, he had worked from models for years, and the beauty of women had disturbed him little more than any other form of beauty. Yet now his brain held but one image—vibrated, burned with it.

Women had come and gone in Hedger's life. Not having had a mother to

begin with, his relations with them, whether amorous or friendly, had been casual. He got on well with janitresses and wash-women, with Indians and with the peasant women of foreign countries. He had friends among the shirtwaist factory girls who came to eat their lunch in Washington Square, and he sometimes took a model for a day into the country. He felt an unreasoning antipathy toward the well-dressed women he saw coming out of big shops, or driving in the Park. If, on his way to the Art Museum, he noticed a pretty girl standing on the steps of one of the houses in upper Fifth Avenue, he frowned at her and went by with his shoulders hunched up as if he were cold. He had never known such girls, or heard them talk, or seen the inside of the houses in which they lived; but he believed them all to be artificial and, in an æsthetic sense, perverted. He saw them enslaved by desire of merchandise and manufactured articles, effective only in making life complicated and insincere and in embroidering it with ugly and meaningless trivialities. They were enough, he thought, to make one almost forget woman as she existed in art, in thought and in the universe.

He had no desire to know the woman who had, for the time at least, so broken up his life, no curiosity about her everyday personality. He shunned any revelation of it, and he listened for Miss Bower's coming and going not to encounter but to avoid her. He wished that the girl who wore shirtwaists and got letters from Chicago would keep out of his way, that she did not exist. With her he had nought to make. But in a room full of sun, before an old mirror, on a little enchanted rug of sleeping colours, he had seen a woman emerge and give herself up to the primitve poetry of motion. And for him she had no geographical associations; unless with Crete, or Alexandria, or Veronese's Venice. She was the immortal conception, the perennial theme.

The first break in Hedger's lethargy occurred one afternoon when two young men came to take Eden Bower out to dine. They went into her music room, laughed and talked for a few minutes, and then took her away with them. They were gone a long while, but he did not go out for food himself; he waited for them to come back. At last he heard them coming down the hall, gayer and more talkative than when they left. One of them sat down at the piano, and they all began to sing. This Hedger found absolutely unendurable. He snatched up his hat and went running down the stairs. Cæsar leaped beside him, hoping that old times were coming back.

They had supper in the oysterman's basement and then sat down in front of their own doorway. The moon stood full over the Square, a thing of regal glory; but Hedger did not see the moon; he was looking, murderously, for men. Presently two, wearing straw hats and white trousers and carrying canes, came down the steps from his house. He rose and dogged them across the Square. They were laughing and seemed very much elated about something. As one stopped to light a cigarette, Hedger caught from the other:

"Don't you think she has a beautiful talent?"

His companion threw away his match. "She has a beautiful figure." They both ran to catch the stage.

Hedger went back to his studio. The light was shining from her transom. For the first time he violated her privacy at night and looked through that fatal aperture. She was sitting, fully dressed, in the window, smoking a cigarette and looking out over the housetops. He watched her until she rose, looked about her with a disdainful, crafty smile, and turned out the light.

The next morning, when Miss Bower went out, Hedger followed her. Her white skirt gleamed ahead of him as she sauntered about the Square. She sat down behind the Garibaldi statue and opened a music book she carried.

She turned the leaves carelessly, and several times glanced in his direction. He was on the point of going over to her when she rose quickly and looked up at the sky. A flock of pigeons had risen from somewhere in the crowded Italian quarter to the south, and were wheeling rapidly up through the morning air, soaring and dropping, scattering and coming together, now gray, now white as silver, as they caught or intercepted the sunlight. She put up her hand to shade her eyes and followed them with a kind of defiant delight in her face.

Hedger came and stood beside her. "You've surely seen them before?"

"Oh, yes," she replied, still looking up. "I see them every day from my windows. They always come home about five o'clock. Where do they live?"

"I don't know. Probably some Italian raises them for the market. They were here long before I came, and I've been here four years."

"In that same gloomy room? Why didn't you take mine when it was vacant?"

"It isn't gloomy. That's the best light for painting."

"Oh, is it? I don't know anything about painting. I'd like to see your pictures some time. You have such a lot in there. Don't they get dusty, piled up against the wall like that?"

"Not very. I'd be glad to show them to you. Is your name really Eden Bower? I've seen your letters on the table."

"Well, it's the name I'm going to sing under. My father's name is Bowers, but my friend, Mr. Jones, a Chicago newspaper man who writes about music, told me to drop the 's.' He's crazy about my voice."

Miss Bower didn't usually tell the whole story—about anything. Her first name, when she lived in Huntington, Ill., was Edna, but Mr. Jones had persuaded her to change it to one which he felt would be worthy of her future. She was quick to take suggestions, though she told him she "didn't see what was the matter with Edna."

She explained to Hedger that she was going to Paris to study. She was waiting in New York for Chicago friends who were to take her over, but who had been detained.

"Did you study in Paris?" she asked.

"No, I've never been in Paris. But I was in the south of France all last summer, studying with C—. He's the biggest man among the moderns—at least I think so."

Miss Bower sat down and made room for him on the bench. "Do tell me about it. I expected to be there by this time, and I can't wait to find out what it's like."

Hedger began to relate how he had seen some of this Frenchman's work in an exhibition, and deciding at once that this was the man with whom he wanted to study, he had taken a boat for Marseilles the next week, going over steerage. He proceeded at once to the little town on the coast where his painter lived, and presented himself. The man never took pupils, but because Hedger had come so far he let him stay. Hedger lived at the master's house and every day they went out together to paint, sometimes on the blazing rocks down by the sea. They wrapped themselves in light woollen blankets and didn't feel the heat. Being there and working with C— was being in paradise, Hedger concluded; he learned more in three months than in all his life before.

Eden Bower laughed.

"You're a funny fellow. Didn't you do anything but work? Are the women very beautiful? Did you have awfully good things to eat and drink?"

Hedger said some of the women were fine looking, especially one girl who went about selling fish and lobsters. About the food there was nothing remarkable—except the ripe figs, he liked those. They drank sour wine, and used goat-butter, which was very strong.

"But don't they have parties or ban-

quets? Aren't there any fine hotels down there?"

"Yes, but they are all closed in summer and the country people are poor. It's a beautiful country, though."

"How beautiful?" she persisted.

"If you want to go in, I'll show you some sketches and you'll see."

Miss Bower rose. "All right. I won't go to my fencing lesson this morning. Do you fence? Here comes your dog. You can't move but he's after you. He always makes a face at me when I meet him in the hall, and shows his nasty little teeth as if he wanted to bite me."

In the studio Hedger got out his sketches, but to Miss Bower, whose favourite pictures were "Christ before Pilate" and a red-haired Magdalen of Henner, these landscapes were not at all beautiful, and they gave her no idea of any country whatsoever. She was careful not to commit herself, however. Her vocal teacher had already convinced her that she had a great deal to learn about many things.

"Why don't we go out to lunch somewhere?" Hedger asked, and began to dust his fingers with a handkerchief which he got out of sight as swiftly as possible.

"All right, the Brevoort," she said carelessly. "I think that's a good place and they have good wine. I don't care for cocktails."

Hedger felt his chin uneasily. "I'm afraid I haven't shaved this morning. If you could wait for me in the Square? It won't take me ten minutes."

Left alone, he found a clean collar and handkerchief, brushed his coat and blacked his shoes, and last of all dug up ten dollars from the bottom of an old copper kettle he had brought from Spain. His winter hat was of such a complexion that the Brevoort hall boy winked at the porter as he took it and placed it on the rack in a row of fresh straw ones.

CHAPTER IV

THAT afternoon Eden Bower was lying on the couch in her music room, her face turned to the window, watching the pigeons. Reclining thus, she could see none of the neighbouring roofs, only the sky itself and the birds that crossed and re-crossed her field of vision, white as scraps of paper blowing in the wind. She was thinking that she was young and handsome and had had a good luncheon, that a very easy-going, light-hearted city lay in the streets below her; and she was wondering why she found this queer painter chap, with his lean, bluish cheeks and heavy black eyebrows, more interesting than the smart young men she met at her teacher's studio.

Eden Bower was at twenty very much the same person that we all know her to be at forty except that she knew a great deal less. But one thing she knew; that she was to be Eden Bower. She was like someone standing before a great show window full of beautiful and costly things, deciding which she will order. She understands that they will not all be delivered immediately, but one by one they will arrive at her door. She already knew some of the many things that were to happen to her; for instance, that the Chicago millionaire who was going to take her abroad with his sister as chaperon, would eventually press his claim in quite another manner. He was the most circumspect of bachelors, afraid of everything obvious, even of women who were too flagrantly handsome. He was a nervous collector of pictures and furniture, a nervous patron of music, and a nervous host; very cautious about his health and about any course of conduct that might make him ridiculous. But she knew that he would at last throw all his precautions to the winds.

People like Eden Bower are inexplicable. Her father sold farming machinery in Huntington, Ill., and she had grown up in that prairie town with no acquaintances or experiences out-

side of it. Yet from her earliest childhood she had not one conviction or opinion in common with the people about her—the only people she knew.

Before she was out of short dresses she had made up her mind that she was going to be an actress, that she would live far away in great cities, that she would be much admired by men and would have everything she wanted. When she was thirteen, and was already singing and reciting for church entertainments, she read in some illustrated magazine a long article about the late Czar of Russia, then just come to the throne or about to come to it. After that, lying in the hammock on the front porch on summer evenings, or sitting through a long sermon in the family pew, she amused herself by trying to make up her mind whether she would or would not be the Czar's mistress when she played in his capital.

Now, Edna had met this fascinating word only in the novels of Ouida—her hard-worked little mother kept a long row of them in the upstairs storeroom, behind the linen chest. In Huntington, women who bore that relation to men were called by a very different name, and their lot was not an enviable one; of all the shabby and poor, they were the shabbiest. But then, Edna had never lived in Huntington; not even before she began to find books like "Sapho" and "Mademoiselle de Maupin," secretly sold in paper covers throughout Illinois. It was as if she had come into Huntington, into the Bowers family, on one of the trains that puffed over the marshes behind their back fence all day long, and was waiting for another train to take her out.

As she grew older and handsomer, she had many beaux, but these small-town boys didn't interest her. If a lad kissed her when he brought her home from a dance, she was indulgent and she rather liked it. But if he pressed her further, she slipped away from him, laughing. After she began to sing in Chicago, she was consistently discreet. She stayed as a guest in rich people's houses, and she knew that she was being watched like a rabbit in a laboratory. Covered up in bed, with the lights out, she thought her own thoughts, and laughed.

This summer in New York was her first taste of freedom. The Chicago capitalist, after all his arrangements were made for sailing, had been compelled to go to Mexico to look after oil interests. His sister knew an excellent singing master in New York. Why should not a discreet, well-balanced girl like Miss Bower spend the summer there, studying quietly? The capitalist suggested that his sister might enjoy a summer on Long Island; he would rent the Griffiths place for her, with all the servants, and Eden could stay there. But his sister met this proposal with a cold stare.

So it fell out that between selfishness and greed, Eden got a summer all her own—which really did a great deal toward making her an artist and whatever else she was afterward to become. She had time to look about, to watch without being watched; to select diamonds in one window and furs in another, to select shoulders and moustaches in the big hotels where she went to lunch. She had the easy freedom of obscurity and the consciousness of power. She enjoyed both. She was in no hurry.

While Eden Bower watched the pigeons, Don Hedger sat on the other side of the bolted doors, looking into a pool of dark turpentine at his idle brushes, wondering why a woman could do this to him. He, too, was sure of his future and knew that he was a chosen man. He could not know, of course, that he was merely the first to fall under a fascination which was to be disastrous to a few men and pleasantly stimulating to many thousands. Each of these two young people sensed the future, but not completely. Don Hedger knew that nothing much would ever happen to him. Eden Bower understood that to her a great deal would happen. But she did not guess that her neighbour would

have more tempestuous adventures sitting in his dark studio than she would find in all the capitals of Europe, or in all the latitude of conduct she was prepared to permit herself.

CHAPTER V

ONE Sunday morning Eden was crossing the Square with a spruce young man in a white flannel suit and a Panama hat. They had been breakfasting at the Brevoort and he was coaxing her to let him come up to her rooms and sing for an hour.

"No, I've got to write letters. You must run along now. I see a friend of mine over there, and I must ask him about something before I go up."

"That fellow with the dog? Where did you pick him up?" The young man glanced toward the seat under a sycamore where Hedger was reading the morning paper.

"Oh, he's an old friend from the West," said Eden easily. "I won't introduce you because he doesn't like people. He's a recluse. Good-bye. I can't be sure about Tuesday. I'll go with you if I have time after my lesson."

She nodded, left him and went over to the seat littered with newspapers. The young man went up the Avenue without looking back.

"Well, what are you going to do today? Shampoo this animal all morning?" Eden inquired teasingly.

He made room for her on the seat. "No, at twelve o'clock I'm going out to Coney Island. One of my models, a fine girl, is going up in a balloon this afternoon. I've often promised to go and see her, and now I'm going."

Eden asked if models usually did such stunts. No, Hedger told her, but Molly Welch added to her earnings in that way.

"I believe," he added, "she likes the excitement of it. She's got a good deal of spirit. That's why I like to paint her. So many models have flaccid bodies."

"And she hasn't, eh? Is she the one who comes to see you? I can't help hearing her, she talks so loud."

"Yes, she has a rough voice, but she's a fine girl. I don't suppose you'd be interested in going?"

"I don't know," Eden sat tracing patterns on the asphalt with the end of her parasol. "Is it any fun? I got up feeling I'd like to do something different to-day. It's the first Sunday I've not had to sing in church. I had that engagement for breakfast at the Brevoort, but it wasn't very exciting. That chap can't talk about anything but himself."

Hedger warmed a little. "If you've never been to Coney Island, you ought to go. It's nice to see all the people; tailors and bartenders and prize-fighters with their best girls, and all sorts of folks taking a holiday."

Eden looked sidewise at him. So one ought to be interested in people of that kind, ought one? He was certainly a funny fellow. Yet he was never, somehow, tiresome. She had seen a good deal of him lately, but she kept wanting to know him better, to find out what made him different from men like the one she had just left—whether he really was as different as he seemed.

"I'll go with you," she said at last, "if you'll leave that at home."

She pointed to Cæsar's flickering ears with her sunshade.

"But he's half the fun. You'd like to hear him bark at the waves when they come in."

"No, I wouldn't. He's jealous and disagreeable if he sees you talking to anyone else. Look at him now."

"Of course, if you make a face at him. He knows what that means and he makes a worse face. He likes Molly Welch, and she'll be disappointed if I don't bring him."

Eden said decidedly that he couldn't take both of them. So at twelve o'clock when she and Hedger got on the boat at Desbrosses street, Cæsar was lying on his pallet with a bone.

Eden enjoyed the boat ride. It was the first time she had been on the water and she felt as if she were embarking

for France. The light, warm breeze and the plunge of the waves made her feel wide awake, and she liked crowds of any kind. They went to the balcony of a big, noisy restaurant and had a shore dinner with tall steins of beer. Hedger had got a big advance from his advertising firm since he first lunched with Miss Bower ten days ago, and he was ready for anything.

After dinner they went to the tent behind the bathing beach, where the tops of two balloons bulged out over the canvas. A red-faced man in a linen suit stood in front of the tent, shouting in a hoarse voice and telling the people that if the crowd was good for five dollars more a beautiful young woman would risk her life for their entertainment. Four little boys in dirty red uniforms ran about taking contributions in their pill-box hats. One of the balloons was bobbing up and down in its tether and people were shoving one another to get nearer the tent.

"Is it dangerous, as he says?" Eden asked.

"Molly says it's simple enough if nothing goes wrong with the balloon. Then it would be all up, I suppose."

"Wouldn't you like to go up with her?"

"I? Of course not. I'm not fond of taking foolish risks."

Eden sniffed. "I shouldn't think sensible risks would be very much fun."

Hedger did not answer, for just then everyone began to shove the other way and shout, "Look out. There she goes!" And a band of six pieces began playing furiously.

As the balloon rose from its tent enclosure, they saw a girl in green tights standing in the basket, holding carelessly to one of the ropes with one hand and with the other waving to the spectators. A long rope trailed behind to keep the balloon from blowing out to sea.

As it soared, the figure in green tights in the basket diminished to a mere spot, and the balloon itself, in the brilliant light, looked like a big silver-gray bat, with its wings folded. When it began to sink, the girl stepped through the hole in the basket to a trapeze that hung below, and gracefully descended through the air, holding to the rod with both hands, keeping her body taut and her feet close together. The crowd—it had grown very large by this time—cheered vociferously. The men took off their hats and waved, little boys shouted, and fat old women, shining with the heat and a beer lunch, murmured admiring comments upon the balloonist's figure.

"Beautiful legs, she has!"

"That's so," Hedger whispered. "Not many girls would look well in that position."

Then, for some reason, he blushed a slow, dark, painful crimson.

The balloon descended slowly, a little way from the tent, and the red-faced man in the linen suit caught Molly Welch before her feet touched the ground and pulled her to one side. The band struck up "Blue Bell" by way of welcome, and one of the sweaty pages ran forward and presented the balloonist with a large bouquet of artificial flowers. She smiled and thanked him, and ran back across the sand to the tent.

"Can't we go inside and see her?" Eden asked. "You can explain to the door man. I want to meet her."

Edging forward, she herself addressed the man in the linen suit and slipped something from her purse into his hand.

They found Molly seated before a trunk that had a mirror in the lid and a "make-up" outfit spread upon the tray. She was wiping the cold cream and powder from her neck with a discarded chemise.

"Hello, Don," she said cordially. "Brought a friend?"

Eden liked her. She had an easy, friendly manner, and there was something boyish and devil-may-care about her.

"Yes, it's fun. I'm mad about it," she said in reply to Eden's questions. "I always want to let go, when I come down on the bar. You don't feel your

weight at all, as you would on a stationary trapeze."

The big drum boomed outside, and the publicity man began shouting to newly arrived boat-loads. Miss Welch took a last pull at her cigarette. "Now you'll have to get out, Don. I change for the next act. This time I go up in a black evening dress, and lose the skirt in the basket before I start down."

"Yes, go along," said Eden. "Wait for me outside the door. I'll stay and help her dress."

Hedger waited and waited, while women of every build bumped into him and begged his pardon, and the red pages ran about holding out their caps for coins, and the people ate and perspired and shifted parasols against the sun. When the band began to play a two-step all the bathers ran up out of the surf to watch the ascent. The second balloon bumped and rose, and the crowd began shouting to the girl in a black evening dress who stood leaning against the ropes and smiling.

"It's a new girl," they called. "It ain't the Countess this time. You're a peach, girlie!"

The balloonist acknowledged these compliments, bowing and looking down over the sea of upturned faces, but Hedger was determined she should not see him, and he darted behind the tent-fly. He was suddenly dripping with cold sweat, his mouth was full of the bitter taste of anger, and his tongue felt stiff behind his set teeth. Molly Welch, in a shirt-waist and a white tam-o'-shanter cap, slipped out from the tent under his arm and laughed up in his face. "She's a crazy one, you brought along. She'll get what she wants!"

"Oh, I'll settle with you, all right!" Hedger brought out with difficulty.

"It's not my fault, Donnie. I couldn't do anything with her. She bought me off. What's the matter with you? Are you soft on her? She's safe enough. It's as easy as rolling off a log, if you keep cool." Molly Welch was rather excited herself, and she was chewing gum at a high speed as she stood beside him, looking up at the floating silver cone.

"Now watch," she exclaimed suddenly. "She's coming down on the bar. I advised her to cut that out, but you see she does it first rate. And she got rid of the skirt, too. I don't think those black tights show off her legs very well, she's got fine legs. But she keeps her feet together like I told her, and makes a good line along the back. See the light on those silver slippers—that was a good idea of mine. Come along to meet her. Don't be a grouch; she's done it fine!"

Molly tweaked his elbow, and then left him standing like a stump while she ran down the beach with the crowd, which was flowing over the sand like a thick liquid and gazing upward at the slowly falling silver star.

Though Hedger was sulking, his eye could not help seeing the low blue welter of the sea, the arrested bathers, standing in the surf, their arms and legs stained red by the dropping sun, shading their eyes and looking shoreward while the great bird settled down.

Molly Welch and the red-faced man caught Eden under the arms and lifted her aside, a red page dashed up with a bouquet, and the band struck up "Blue Bell." Eden laughed and bowed, took Molly's arm and ran up the sand in her black tights and silver slippers, dodging the friendly old women and the gallant sports who wanted to offer their homage on the spot.

When she emerged from the tent, dressed in her own clothes, that part of the beach was almost deserted. She stepped to her companion's side and said, carelessly, "Hadn't we better try to catch this boat? I hope you're not angry with me. Really, it was lots of fun."

Hedger looked at his watch.

"Yes, we have fifteen minutes to get to the boat," he said politely.

As they walked toward the pier, one of the red-imp pages ran up panting.

"Lady, you're carrying off the bouquet," he said aggrievedly.

Eden stopped and looked at the bunch

of spotty cotton roses in her hand. "Of course. I want them for a souvenir. You gave them to me yourself."

"I give 'em to you for looks, but you can't take 'em away. They belong to the show."

"Oh, you always use the same bunch?"

"Sure we do. There ain't too much money in this business."

She laughed and tossed them back to him.

"Why are you angry?" she asked Hedger. "I wouldn't have done it if I'd been with some fellows, but I thought you were the sort who wouldn't mind. Molly didn't for a minute think you would."

"What possessed you to do such a fool thing?" he asked roughly.

"I don't know. When I saw Molly coming down, I wanted to try it. It looked exciting. Didn't I hold myself as well as she did?"

Hedger shrugged his shoulders, but in his heart he instantly forgave her.

The return boat was not crowded, though the boats that passed them, going out, were packed to the rails. The sun was setting. Boys and girls sat on the long benches with their arms about each other, singing.

Eden felt a strong wish to propitiate her companion, to be alone with him. She had been curiously wrought up by her balloon trip; it was a lark, but not very satisfying unless one came back to something after the flight. She wanted to be admired and adored.

Though Eden said nothing, and sat with her arms limp on the rail in front of her, looking languidly at the rising silhouette of the city and the bright path of the sun, Hedger felt a strange drawing near to her. If he but brushed her white skirt with his knee, there was an instant communication between them, such as there had never been before. They did not talk at all, but when they went over the gang-plank she took his arm and kept her shoulder close to him. He felt as if they were enveloped in a highly charged atmosphere, an invisible network of subtle, almost painful sensibility. They had somehow taken hold of each other.

An hour later, they were dining in the back garden of a little French hotel on Ninth street, long since passed away. It was cool and leafy there, and the mosquitoes were not very numerous. A party of South Americans at another table were drinking champagne, and Eden murmured that she thought she would like some, if it were not too expensive. "Perhaps it will make me think I am in the balloon again. That was a very nice feeling. You've forgiven me, haven't you?"

Hedger gave her a quick straight look from under his black eyebrows, and something went over her that was like a chill, except that it was warm and feathery. She drank most of the wine; her companion was indifferent to it. He was talking more to her to-night than he had ever done before. She asked him about a new picture she had seen in his room, a queer thing full of stiff, supplicating female figures. "It's Indian, isn't it?"

"Yes. I call it Rain Spirits, or maybe, Indian Rain. In the South-west, where I've been a good deal, the Indian traditions make women have to do with the rainfall. They were supposed to control it, somehow, and to be able to find springs and make moisture come out of the earth. You see I'm trying to learn to paint what people think and feel; to get away from all that photographic stuff. When I look at you, I don't see what a camera would see, do I?"

"How can I tell?"

"Well, if I should paint you, I could make you understand what I see." For the second time that day Hedger crimsoned unexpectedly, and his eyes fell and steadily contemplated a dish of little radishes. "That particular picture I got from a story a Mexican priest told me; he said he found it in an old manuscript book in a monastery down there, written by some Spanish missionary. He got his stories from the Aztecs. This one he called 'The

Forty Lovers of the Queen,' and it was more or less about rain-making."

"Aren't you going to tell it to me?" Eden asked.

Hedger fumbled among the radishes. "I don't know if it's the proper kind of story."

Eden smiled; "Oh, forget about that! I've been balloon riding to-day. I like to hear you talk."

Her low voice was flattering. She had seemed like clay in his hands ever since they got on the boat to come home. He leaned back in his chair, forgot his food and, looking at her intently, began to tell his story, the theme of which he somehow felt was dangerous to-night.

The tale began, he said, somewhere in Ancient Mexico, and concerned the daughter of a king. The birth of this Princess was preceded by unusual portents. Three times her mother dreamed that she was delivered of serpents, which betokened that the child she was to bear would have power with the rain gods. The serpent was the symbol of water. The Princess grew up dedicated to the gods, and wise men taught her the rain-making mysteries. She was guarded from men at all times, for it was the law of Thunder that she be so until her marriage. In the years of her adolescence, rain was abundant with her people. The oldest man could not remember such fertility.

When the Princess had counted eighteen years, her father went to drive out a war party that harried his borders on the north and troubled his prosperity. The King destroyed the invaders and brought home many prisoners. Among the prisoners was a young chief, taller than any of his captors, of such strength and ferocity that the King's people came a day's journey to look at him. When the Princess beheld his great stature, and saw that his arms and breast were covered with the figures of wild animals, bitten into the skin and coloured, she begged his life from her father. She desired that he should practise his art upon her, and prick upon her skin the signs of Rain and Lightning and Thunder, and stain the wounds with herb-juices, as they were upon his own body. For many days, upon the roof of the King's house, the Princess submitted herself to the bone needle, and the women with her marvelled at her fortitude.

But the Princess was without shame before the Captive, and it came about that he threw from him his needles and his stains, and embraced the Princess; and her women ran down from the roof screaming, to call the guard which stood at the gateway of the King's house, and none stayed to protect their mistress. When the guard came, the Captive was thrown into bonds, and he was maimed, and his tongue was torn out and he was given for a slave to the Rain Princess.

The country of the Aztecs to the east was tormented by thirst, and their king, hearing much of the rain-making arts of the Princess, sent an embassy to her father, with presents and an offer of marriage. So the Princess went from her father to be the Queen of the Aztecs, and she took with her the Captive, who served her in everything with entire fidelity and slept upon a mat before her door.

The King gave his bride a fortress on the outskirts of the city, whither she retired to entreat the rain gods. This fortress was called the Queen's House, and on the night of the new moon the Queen came to it from the palace. But when the moon waxed and grew toward the round, then the Queen returned to the King. The drought abated in the country and rain fell abundantly by reason of the Queen's power with the stars.

When the Queen went to her own house she took with her no servant but the Captive, and he slept outside her door and brought her food after she had fasted. The Queen had a jewel of great value, a turquoise that had fallen from the sun, and had the image of the sun upon it. And when she admired a young man whom she had seen in the army or among the slaves, she sent the Captive to him with the jewel, for a

sign that he should come to her at the Queen's House upon business concerning the welfare of all. And some, after she had talked with them, she sent away with rewards; and some she took in and kept them by her for one day or two.

Afterward she called the Captive and bade him conduct the youth by the secret way he had come, underneath the chambers of the fortress. But for the going away of the Queen's visitors the Captive took out the bar that was beneath a stone in the floor of the passage and put in its stead a rush-reed, and the youth stepped upon it and fell through into a cavern that was the bed of an underground river, and whatever was thrown into it was not seen again. In this service and in all others the Captive did not fail the Queen.

But when the Queen sent for the Captain of the Archers, she detained him four days, and on the fourth day she went to the Captive outside her door and said: "To-morrow take this man up by the sure way, by which the King comes, and let him live."

In the Queen's door were arrows, purple and white. When she desired the King to come to her publicly, with his guard, she sent him a white arrow, but when she sent the purple, he came secretly and covered himself with his mantle to be hidden from the stone gods at the gate. When the Queen thus detained the Captain of the Archers, and moreover purposed to let him live, the Captive took a purple arrow to the King, and the King came secretly and found them together. He killed the Captain with his own hand, but the Queen he brought to public trial. The Captive, when he was put to the question, told on his fingers forty men that he had let through the underground passage into the river. The Captive and the Queen were put to death by fire, both on the same day, and afterward there was scarcity of rain.

* * * * *

Eden Bower sat shivering a little while she listened. Hedger was not trying to please her, she thought, but to antagonize and frighten her by his fantastic story. She had often told herself that his lean, big-boned lower jaw was like his bulldog's, but to-night his face made Cæsar's most savage and determined expression seem an affectation. Now she was looking at the man he really was. Nobody's eyes had ever defied her like this. They were searching her and seeing everything: all she had concealed from Livingston, and from the millionaire and his friends, and from the newspaper men. He was testing her, trying her out, and she was more ill at ease than she wished to show.

"That's quite a thrilling story," she said at last, rising and winding her scarf about her throat. "It must be getting late. Almost everyone has gone."

They walked down the Avenue like people who have quarrelled, or who wish to get rid of each other. Hedger did not take her arm at the street crossings and they did not linger in the Square. At her door he tried none of the old devices of the Livingston boys. He stood like a post, having forgotten to take off his hat, gave her a harsh, threatening glance, muttered "good-night," and shut his own door noisily.

There was no question of sleep for Eden Bower. Her brain was working like a machine that would never stop. After she undressed she tried to calm her nerves by smoking a cigarette, lying on the divan by the open window. But she grew wider and wider awake, combating the challenge that had flamed all evening in the strange man's eyes. The balloon had been one kind of excitement, the wine another; but the thing that had roused her, as a blow rouses a proud man, was the doubt, the contempt, the sneering hostility with which this violent man had looked at her when he told his savage story. Crowds and balloons were all very well, she reflected, but woman's chief adventure is man. With a mind over-active and a sense of life over-strong, she wanted to walk across the roofs in the

starlight; to sail over the sea and face at once a world of which she had never been afraid.

Hedger must be asleep; his dog had stopped sniffing under the double doors. Eden put on her wrapper and slippers and stole softly down the hall over the old carpet; one loose board creaked just as she reached the ladder. The trap-door was open, as always on hot nights. When she stepped out on the roof she drew a long breath and walked across it, looking up at the stars. Her foot touched something soft; she heard a low growl, and on the instant Cæsar's sharp little teeth caught her ankle and waited. His breath was like steam on her leg. Nobody had ever intruded upon his roof before, and he panted for the movement or the word that would let him spring his jaw. Instead the hand that held it closed on his throat, as Hedger reached out from his blankets.

"Wait a minute. I'll settle with him," he said grimly.

He dragged the dog toward the manhole and disappeared. When he came back he found Eden standing over by the dark chimney, looking away in an offended attitude.

"I caned him unmercifully," he panted. "Of course, you didn't hear anything; he never whines when I beat him. He didn't nip you, did he?"

"I don't know whether he broke the skin or not," she answered aggrievedly, still looking off into the west.

"If I were one of your friends in white trousers, I'd strike a match to find whether you were hurt, though I know you are not, and then I'd see your ankle, wouldn't I?"

"I suppose so."

He shook his head and stood with his hands in the pockets of his old painting jacket. "I'm not up to such boy-tricks. If you want the place to yourself, I'll clear out. But if you stay here and I stay here—" he shrugged his shoulders.

Eden did not stir, and she made no reply. Her head drooped slightly, as if she were considering. But the moment he put his arms about her they began to talk, both at once, as people do in an opera. The instant avowal of each brought out a flood of trivial admissions. Hedger confessed his crime, was reproached and forgiven, and now Eden knew what it was in his look that she had found so disturbing of late.

Standing against the black chimney, with the sky behind and blue shadows before, they looked like one of Hedger's own paintings of that period; two figures, one white and one dark, and nothing whatever distinguishable about them but that they were male and female. The faces were lost, the contours blurred in shadow, but the figures were a man and a woman, and that was their whole concern and their mysterious beauty—it was the rhythm in which they moved, at last, along the roof and down into the house. She came down very slowly. The excitement and bravado and uncertainty of that long day and night seemed all at once to tell upon her. When his feet were on the carpet and he reached up to lift her down, she twined her arms about his neck as after a long separation, and turned her face to him, and her lips, with their perfume of youth.

CHAPTER VI

In time they quarrelled, of course, and about an abstraction—as young people often do, as mature people almost never do. Eden came in late one afternoon. She had been with some of her musical friends to lunch at Burton Ives' studio, and she began telling Hedger about that beautiful place. He listened a moment and then threw down his brushes.

"I know exactly what it's like," he said impatiently. "A very good department store conception of a studio. It's one of the show places."

"Well, it's a gorgeous place, and he said I could bring you to see him. The boys tell me he's awfully kind about giving people a lift, and you might get something out of it."

Hedger started up and pushed his

canvas out of the way. "What could I possibly get from Burton Ives? He's almost the worst painter in the world; the stupidest, I mean."

Eden was annoyed. Burton Ives had been very nice to her and had begged her to sit for him.

"You must admit that he's a very successful one," she said coldly.

"Of course he is. Anybody can be successful who will do that sort of thing. I wouldn't paint his pictures for all the money in New York."

"Well, I saw a lot of them, and I think they are beautiful."

Hedger bowed stiffly.

"What's the use of being a great painter if nobody knows about you?" Eden went on persuasively. "Why don't you paint the kind of pictures people can understand, and then, after you're successful, do whatever you like."

"As I look at it," said Hedger brusquely, "I am successful."

Eden looked about the dark hole. "Well, I don't see any evidences of it," she said, biting her lip. "He has a Japanese servant and a wine cellar and keeps a riding horse."

Hedger melted a little. "My dear, I have the most expensive luxury in the world, and I am much more extravagant than Burton Ives, for I work to please nobody but myself."

"You mean you could make money and don't? That you don't try to get a public?"

"Exactly. A public only wants what has been done over and over. I'm painting for painters—who haven't been born."

"What would you do if I brought Mr. Ives down here to see your things?"

"Well, for God's sake, don't! Before he left I'd probably tell him what I thought of him."

Eden rose. "I give you up. You know very well there's only one kind of success that's real."

"Yes, but it's not the kind you mean. So you've been thinking me a scrub painter, who needs a helping hand from some fashionable studio man? What the devil have you had anything to do with me for, then?"

"There's no use talking to you," said Eden, walking slowly toward the door. "I've been trying to pull wires for you all afternoon, and this is what it comes to."

She had expected that the tidings of a prospective call from the great man would be received very differently, and had been thinking as she came home in the stage how, as with a magic wand, she might gild Hedger's future, float him out of his dark hole on a tide of prosperity, see his name in the papers and his pictures in the windows on Fifth Avenue.

Hedger mechanically snapped the midsummer leash on Cæsar's collar and they ran downstairs and hurried through Sullivan street off toward the river. He wanted to be among rough, honest people, to get down where the big drays bumped over stone paving blocks, and the men wore corduroy trousers and kept their shirts open at the neck. He stopped for a drink in one of the sagging bar-rooms on the water front. He had never in his life been so deeply wounded; he did not know he could be so hurt. He had told this girl all his secrets. On the roof, in these warm, heavy summer nights, with her hands locked in his, he had been able to explain all his misty ideas about an unborn art the world was waiting for; had been able to explain them better than he had ever done to himself. And she had looked away to the chattels of this uptown studio and coveted them for him! To her he was only an unsuccessful Burton Ives.

Then why, as he had put it to her, did she take up with him? Young, beautiful, talented as she was, why had she wasted herself on a scrub? Pity? Hardly; she wasn't sentimental. There was no explaining her. But in this passion that had seemed so fearless and so fated-to-be, his own position now looked to him ridiculous. Hedger ground his teeth so loud that his dog,

trotting beside him, heard him and looked up.

While they were having supper at the oysterman's, Hedger planned his escape. Whenever he saw her again, everything he had told her, that he should never have told anyone, would come back to him; ideas that he had never whispered even to the painter whom he worshipped and had gone all the way to France to see. To her they must seem his apology for not having horses and a valet, or merely the puerile boastfulness of a weak man. He would catch the train out to Long Beach to-night, and to-morrow he would go on to the north end of Long Island, where an old friend of his had a summer studio among the sand dunes, and he would stay until things came right in his mind. And she could find a smart painter, or take her punishment.

When he went home, Eden's room was dark; she was dining out somewhere. He threw his things into a hold-all he had carried all about the world with him, strapped up some colours and canvases, and ran downstairs.

CHAPTER VII

Five days later Hedger was a restless passenger on a dirty, crowded Sunday train, coming back to town. Of course he saw now how unreasonable he had been in expecting a Huntington girl to know anything about pictures; here was a whole continent full of people who knew nothing about pictures and he didn't hold it against them. What had such things to do with him and Eden Bower? When he lay out on the dunes, watching the moon come up out of the sea, it had seemed to him that there was no wonder in the world like the wonder of Eden Bower. He was going back to her because she was older than art, because she was the most overwhelming thing that had ever come into his life.

He had written her yesterday, begging her to be at home this evening, telling her that he was contrite, and wretched enough.

Now that he was on his way to her, his stronger feeling unaccountably changed to a mood that was playful and tender. He wanted to share everything with her, even the most trivial things. He wanted to tell her about the people on the train, coming back tired from their holiday with bunches of wilted flowers and dirty daisies; to tell her that the fish-man, to whom she had often sent him for lobsters, was among the passengers, disguised in a silk shirt and a spotted tie, and how his wife looked exactly like a fish, even to her eyes.

He could tell her, too, that he hadn't even unstrapped his canvases—that ought to convince her.

In those days passengers from Long Island came into New York by ferry. Hedger had to be quick about getting his dog out of the express car in order to catch the first boat. The East River, and the bridges, and the city to the west, were burning in the conflagration of the sunset; there was that great home-coming reach of evening in the air.

The car changes from Thirty-fourth street were too many and too perplexing; for the first time in his life Hedger took a hansom cab for Washington Square. Cæsar sat bolt-upright on the worn leather cushion beside him, and they jogged off, looking down on the rest of the world.

It was twilight when they drove down lower Fifth Avenue into the Square, and through the Arch behind them were the two long rows of pale violet lights that used to bloom so beautifully against the gray stone and asphalt. Here and yonder about the Square hung globes that shed a radiance not unlike the blue mists of evening, emerging softly when daylight died, as the stars emerged in the thin blue sky. Under them the sharp shadows of the trees fell on the cracked asphalt and the sleeping grass. The first stars and the first lights were growing silver against the gradual darkening, when Hedger paid his driver and went into the house—which,

thank God, was still there! On the hall table lay his letter of yesterday, unopened.

He went upstairs with every sort of fear and every sort of hope clutching at his heart; it was as if tigers were tearing him. Why was there no gas burning in the top hall? He found matches and the gas bracket. He knocked, but got no answer; nobody was there. Before his own door were exactly five bottles of milk, standing in a row. The milk-boy had taken spiteful pleasure in thus reminding him that he forgot to stop his order.

Hedger went down to the basement; it, too, was dark. The janitress was taking her evening airing on the basement steps. She sat waving a palm-leaf fan majestically, her dirty calico dress open at the neck. She told him at once that there had been "changes." Miss Bower's room was to let again, and the piano would go to-morrow. Yes, she left on Saturday, she sailed for Europe with friends from Chicago. They arrived on Friday, heralded by many telegrams. Very rich people they were said to be, though the man had refused to pay the nurse a month's rent in lieu of notice—which would have been only right, as the young lady had agreed to take the rooms until October.

Mrs. Foley had observed, too, that he didn't overpay her or Willy for their trouble, and a great deal of trouble they had been put to, certainly. Yes, the young lady was very pleasant, but the nurse said there were rings on the mahogany table where she had put tumblers and wine glasses. It was just as well she was gone. The Chicago man was uppish in his ways, but not much to look at. She supposed he had poor health, for there was nothing to him inside his clothes.

Hedger went slowly up the stairs—never had they seemed so long, or his legs so heavy. The upper floor was emptiness and silence. He unlocked his room, lit the gas and opened the windows. When he went to put his coat in the closet, he found, hanging among his clothes, a pale, flesh-tinted dressing gown he had liked to see her wear, with a perfume—oh, a perfume that was still Eden Bower! He shut the door behind him and there, in the dark, for a moment he lost his manliness. It was when he held this garment to him that he found a letter in the pocket.

The note was written with a lead pencil, in haste: She was sorry that he was angry, but she still didn't know just what she had done. She had thought Mr. Ives would be useful to him; she guessed he was too proud. She wanted awfully to see him again, but Fate came knocking at her door after he had left her. She believed in Fate. She would never forget him and she knew he would become the greatest painter in the world. Now she must pack. She hoped he wouldn't mind her leaving the dressing gown; somehow, she could never wear it again.

After Hedger read this, standing under the gas, he went back into the closet and knelt down before the wall; the knot hole had been plugged up with a ball of wet paper—the same blue notepaper on which her letter was written.

He was hard hit. To-night he had to bear the loneliness of a whole lifetime. Knowing himself so well, he could hardly believe that such a thing had ever happened to him; that such a woman had lain happy and contented in his arms. And now it was over. He turned out the light and sat down on his painter's stool before the big window. Cæsar, on the floor beside him, rested his head on his master's knee. We must leave Hedger thus, sitting in solitude with his dog, looking up at the stars.

CHAPTER VIII

Coming, Eden Bower!

This legend, in electric lights over the Manhattan Opera House, for weeks announced her return to New York, after years of spectacular success in Paris. She came at last, under the management of an American Opera

Company, but bringing her own *chef d'orchestre*.

One bright December afternoon Eden Bower was going down Fifth Avenue in her car, on the way to her broker in William street. Her thoughts were entirely upon stocks—Cerro de Pasco, and how much she should buy of it—when she suddenly looked up and realized that she was skirting Washington Square. She had not seen the place since she rolled out of it in an old-fashioned four-wheeler to seek her fortune, eighteen years ago.

"*Arretez, Alphonse. Attendez-moi,*" she called, and opened the door before he could reach it. The children who were streaking over the asphalt on roller skates saw a lady in a long fur coat and short, high-heeled shoes alight from a French car and pace slowly about the Square, holding her muff to her chin. This spot, at least, had changed very little, she reflected; the same trees, the same fountain, the white arch, and over yonder Garibaldi, drawing the sword for freedom. There, just opposite her, was the old red brick house.

"Yes, that is the place," she was thinking. "I can smell the carpets now, and that dog—what was his name? That grubby bathroom at the end of the hall, and that dreadful Hedger—Still, there was something about him, you know—"

She glanced up and blinked against the sun. From somewhere in the crowded quarter south of the Square a flock of pigeons rose, wheeling quickly upward into the brilliant blue sky. She threw back her head, pressed her muff closer to her chin, and watched them with a smile of amazement and delight. So they still rose, out of all that dirt and noise and squalor, fleet and silvery, just as they used to rise that summer when she was twenty and went up in a balloon on Coney Island!

Alphonse opened the door and tucked her robes about her. All the way down town her mind wandered from Cerro de Pasco, and she kept smiling and looking up at the sky.

When she had finished her business with the broker, she asked him to look in the telephone book for the address of M. Gaston Jules, the picture dealer, and slipped the paper on which he wrote it into her glove. It was five o'clock when she reached the French Galleries, as they were called. On entering, she gave the attendant her card, asking him to take it to M. Jules. The dealer appeared very promptly and begged her to come into his private office, where he pushed a great chair toward his desk for her and signalled his secretary to leave the room.

"How good your lighting is in here," she observed, glancing about. "I met you at Simon's studio, didn't I? Oh, no! I never forget anybody who interests me." She threw her muff on his writing table and sank into the deep chair. "I have come to you for some information that's not in my line. Do you know anything about an American painter named Hedger?"

He took the seat opposite her. "Don Hedger? But, certainly! There are some very interesting things of his in an exhibition at V—'s. If you would care to—"

She held up her hand. "No, no. I've no time to go to exhibitions. Is he a man of any importance?"

"Certainly. He is one of the first men among the moderns. That is to say, among the very moderns. He is always coming up with something different. He often exhibits in Paris, you must have seen—"

"No, I tell you I don't go to exhibitions. Has he had great success? That is what I want to know."

M. Jules pulled at his short gray moustache. "But, Madame, there are many kinds of success," he began cautiously.

Madame gave a dry laugh. "Yes, so he used to say. We once quarrelled on that issue. And how would you define his particular kind?"

M. Jules grew thoughtful. "He is a great name with all the young men, and he is decidedly an influence in art. But one can't definitely place a man

who is original, erratic, and who is changing all the time."

She cut him short. "Is he much talked about at home? In Paris, I mean? Thanks. That's all I want to know." She rose and began buttoning her coat. "One doesn't like to have been an utter fool, even at twenty."

"*Mais, non!*" M. Jules handed her her muff with a quick, sympathetic glance. He followed her out through the carpeted showroom, now closed to the public and draped in cheesecloth, and put her into her car with words appreciative of the honour she had done him in calling.

Leaning back in the cushions, Eden Bower closed her eyes, and her face, as the street lamps flashed their ugly orange light upon it, became hard and settled, like a plaster cast; so a sail, that has been filled by a strong breeze, behaves when the wind suddenly dies. To-morrow night the wind would blow again, and this mask would be the golden face of Clytemnestra. But a "big" career takes its toll, even with the best of luck.

AUGUST NOON

By Glenn Ward Dresbach

LIKE fairy ships at anchor
On streams of daytime sleep,
Are all the water lilies
Where weary waters creep.

Like maidens whose gay lovers
Have had a change of mind,
Are all the drooping willows
Yearning for the Wind.

Even a thrush sits silent
Where reeds begin to die . . .
A hawk seems caged, uncaring,
In one hot bit of sky.

Oh, what has gone from Summer
Here where I walk alone?
Something that goes from loving
When all of Love is known!

LIFE IS FULL OF ROMANCE

By Edward Arthur Beder

I CAME upon her as I turned the corner. A sweet, gracious little figure nestling close by the side entrance of a big department store. Daintily aloof from the eager crowd that passed her by was she, unconscious of all those hurrying footsteps, all unconcerned as to their varied destinations, seeing only the little blue envelope she held in her hand. Somehow the scent of Romance came to me as I beheld her, standing so still and so sweetly engrossed in her missive.

The brisk throngs that have their being in the lunch hour of a great city made of her a piquant, arresting figure. Not hard to guess what that little blue envelope contained. Not hard to guess of its love whispers set to paper and of the tremulous dreams, delicate as a flute's trills, stirring so finely in her.

Love had touched this child, singling her out from the myriads, making of her a torchbearer to light up a sordid world with its magic.

It warmed my heart to see how she lingered over the little envelope, gazing so raptly at it, making no motion to break the seal. It enchanted me! Ah, little blue envelope filled with Love!

I drew nearer—I crept close. She was studying the directions for mixing a seidlitz powder.

LOVE'S COMING

By Neeta Marquis

THE gladdest day that my heart e'er knew
Was when Falselove came in the garb of True,
And sunned himself in my glamoured eyes
While he taught me the songs of Paradise.

The saddest day—can my heart forget
Brief hours drawn out in one long regret
For that holden vision of soul? God wot!—
Was when Truelove came, and I knew him not.

THE IMPOSSIBLE ROMANCE

By Mifflin Crane

I

MRS. BRINTON took the small flat in Harley Street a month after the death of her sister. She was alone now, but her condition seldom brought her any melancholy; she enjoyed the quiet freedom of this new life.

The twenty years' association with her sister—it began when Mrs. Brinton was twenty-five, immediately after the divorce from her husband—had created certain ties and so, in a measure, she regretted her sister's death, felt lonely at times, missed the old habits, even the frequent, accustomed disagreements.

Yet she suffered from no sincere grief. In her sister's home she had been, after all, the dependent, and there were those unforgettable moments when she had been made to feel it. And how many times during the long years, even disregarding instances of direct unpleasantness, had she regretted the early, impetuous separation from Brinton; time had soon softened the harsh proportions of his misdemeanour.

Parted from him, the days that took her out of youth to middle age had passed in little things, the small quarrels, the small duties, the colourless little excitements. Now that she was alone, and retrospection came as a natural consequence, it astonished her to review her life and find it so meagre in event.

It was not, however, a discovery that involved the reaction of sharp emotion; her regrets were gentle, the twilight mood of melancholy.

Despite these emotions, life in this little apartment was generally agreeable and her prospect occupied her thoughts equally with her sorrow for the past.

To a degree there came to her such charming anticipations as one feels in the face of a new adventure, an adventure with potentialities to change all the complexion of a life. She was free again, independent at last, and this was a condition that brought its implications —vague little expectancies, vague allures.

Harley Street was pleasant; she enjoyed its touch of another time. Although all the old families, once the city's aristocracy, had moved out long ago and the big brick houses had been remodelled and given over to many like herself, a flavour of the older spirit survived, like a scent of forgotten perfume. The air of gentility persisted, even without its true embodiment. The street was still quiet, the formal houses stood as memorials of a time more gracious, and people walking through seemed to take a subtle dignity from the street. Her front window gave her a good view up and down; she liked to muse there, watching the languid life below.

She had dropped the trivial people of her former acquaintance, her sister's tiresome friends; most of them were unaware of her new location. At the moment she felt very little urge to know new people; it was more pleasant to be alone.

Sitting at the window, looking down into the street, she was almost set apart from life. She saw the people of the street go in and out of their houses, came to recognize some of them, knew

the hours of their departure and return, wondered listlessly about their life in those periods that were concealed from her.

Then, late one afternoon, she saw a man emerge from the apartment-house directly across the street who was new to her. Her first glance was an indifferent one, but in a moment she was leaning closer to the window, her cheek touching the glass, her eyes widened in startled concentration.

She sensed the man's identity at once, in so far as it implied a close intimacy, even if recognition was not immediate.

He had descended the steps; he was walking slowly down the street. He was slim, middle-aged, very well set-up. A light-coloured spring overcoat was folded over one arm; in his hand he swung a cane. He did not look up and so saw nothing of her startled watching, but passed slowly and unconsciously, and was nearly out of the range of her window before the sudden realization of his exact identity came sharply to her. He was her former husband!

Realizing this, she drew back quickly, under the swift fear that he might turn his head, glance up, and see her there. A moment later she appreciated her absurdity—he could never make out her face; it was assuredly vague in the subdued light of her room. She leaned forward to the window again; he had turned the corner and was gone.

A disappointment swept over her in an emotional wave. She wanted to see him again, study his figure, his walk, the way he swung his cane. She felt an intensity of curiosity, that seemed to come out augmented from so many years of indifference. It startled her now to appreciate her long apathy to the life of this man, who had once touched her dreams into being, held her in his arms, given her a year of half-forgotten romance. In that moment it seemed incredible that she should have been so complacent, insensible, willing to forget.

Later, in the evening, when she had returned from her dinner at a little restaurant near by, her thoughts turned to the present, to the strangeness of the chance that had brought them both to the same street after twenty-five years, during which neither had seen the other. From that accident there were possibilities to be inferred that stirred her expectations.

She was sitting in her bedroom, before the mirror of her dressing-table, coiling her hair into two long braids for the night. Pausing, she moved her body forward a little, and looked closely into the glass. Beside the face that looked out to her she tried to summon another, her own face of a former time, when they had been together and both were young.

Contrasting the two, she found, of course that the fundamentals were unchanged. As a woman of nearly forty-five she was still a brunette; skilful hairdressing could conceal the few white threads that were beginning to appear in the jet of her hair. The large, brown-black eyes, if less lustrous than those of the younger face, were still noteworthy and something of their characteristic candour remained.

Otherwise she understood the extremity of the change. The red of her lips had faded; the full mouth had lost its pouted curves, so that now, straighter in line, it seemed too large. Her cheeks had grown broader, the chin was heavier, her throat was no longer a column of slenderness. He, Brinton, appeared to have suffered less from the years than she: she visioned him again, coming out astonishingly from the opposite house, with the old, familiar manner.

Sooner or later they would meet face to face. What would he say, what words would they both find? She pictured the meeting, imagined their salutations—and then she found herself shrinking from it.

A curious fear of having him see her again possessed her, a hesitancy like a child's when he must walk into a room peopled with strangers. Perhaps this was her shrinking from the revelation of her changed self—he had known her only as a girl. It angered her to admit

such a cause. His opinion should mean nothing; he was part of another time, a memory.

She went to sleep indulging in some agreeable fancies. After all, it would probably be interesting to meet him again.

II

YET, in the following days, she found herself running true to her first inclination, avoiding the chance of meeting. Preparing to go outdoors, she always turned instinctively to the window, to make sure that he was nowhere on the street. Coming out of the house, she looked up and down, like one who is afraid, and she felt that if she saw him she would hurry indoors again.

But from the concealment of her window she observed him a dozen times. She saw him go in and out, always the same—well set-up, self-possessed; essentially she understood that he had always been a charming man. She perceived that years had only added to his pleasant ease of manner, that appeared still touched with a flavour of quixotic eccentricity.

Of herself she felt immeasurably less assured.

Her desires fluctuated. Each morning, awakening, she thought of the prospect of meeting him with a pleasant thrill; it was romantic, so fully out of the ordinary. Later, her hesitancy asserted itself. Watching from her window, she would discover him leaving the house; imagining herself going out on the street at the same moment, their eyes meeting, recognition coming to both, she shrank definitely from the reality.

Her fears, acting through her imagination, encompassed naturally the chance meeting, occurring without her own design. She felt it would come, however. Of course, she never foresaw the curious complication it actually involved.

She had gone out early one afternoon, intending to walk up to the shopping district. The day was delightful; all the trees were fully in leaf now; like a magic narcotic the languor of warm weather touched the manner of the passers-by.

Mrs. Brinton felt caressingly at ease. For the moment her mind was liberated from all her recent quandary; she was again in the mood that came to her immediately after her liberation from the old, dependent life.

At the corner a small boy, running at play, collided with her and was gone in a moment like a shy animal; she laughed, adjusted her dress, looked up —and confronted her former husband.

He had turned the corner and in the instant's little excitement she had been unconscious of his step. She stared at him with widened eyes, startled, wordless.

Meeting her eyes, he stopped, and his own face took on the expression of surprise. She felt that he recognized her at once. A swift wonder passed through her mind: what would be his first words? She waited for him to speak. Her aplomb had abandoned her; she felt silly, a little hysterical, like a young girl meeting her first lover, and at the same time the ridiculousness of her emotions angered her.

Then, incongruously, Brinton raised his hat with a formal politeness. The expression of his face had changed.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "The child ran into you, didn't he? Did he hurt you?"

Her features, shaped into the surprise of unexpected encounter, still expressed astonishment, but now it resulted from another source, from an incredible discovery. Contrary to her first belief, he did not recognize her! With his formality of politeness he stood in front of her, waiting for her to speak.

His face had all its old quality; new lines were there, the old lines were deeper, and in the wrinkles about his eyes she found the outward manifestation of a certain cynicism that was absent from the countenance of her recollections, but withal she found him astonishingly unchanged. And, finding

him so, how was it possible that he did not know *her?*

But something had to be said; he was already surprised that she did not answer him.

She forced a smile to her lips.

"I didn't know what happened to me," she said. "The imp took my breath away. But, of course, I'm quite all right now."

He stepped aside to let her pass, but as she hesitated a moment, still incredulous of the outcome of their meeting, he gave her a quick, friendly smile and spoke again.

"After a fashion we seem to have met each other, don't you think?" he asked. "I was just going back to my rooms after a stroll, but really I'm bored; I don't want to go indoors so soon. I'd be awfully glad if you'd let me walk a little way with you."

His manner was charming, his politeness was unaltered; she was amused at his formality. She felt an hysterical impulse to laugh, to take him by the shoulders and shake down his poise, ask him if he had no memory at all, if twenty years had changed her into a gargoyle. But she only nodded, dropping her eyes from his own.

"I've seen you before," she murmured.

Her face was averted, but she knew that he turned his own sharply; when she looked there was a polite questioning in his glance.

"No, I don't mean that we've met lately and that you've forgotten. But we live in the same street; once or twice I've seen you coming out of your flat. We're just across the street from each other."

"Well! I'm glad that we're neighbours," he said. "It may be you sometimes feel as dull as I do. Perhaps you'll let me run in and have a chat with you sometimes."

"I'd be glad," she answered. "I've only lived here a short time; I'm not used to being alone. It does get dull."

The conversation continued; she answered his questions and made little queries of her own, but their talk seemed unreal, like banal dialogue repeated from a memorized page. She knew that she was often inattentive, and felt that he found her difficult to know, but her incredulity prevented her full acceptance of the situation.

They walked to the square, sat down for a time on one of the benches and, returning finally, he left her at the door of the flats. She found herself promising to take dinner with him the following evening. She saw him lift his hat and go.

Indoors she hurried to her bedroom, rushed to the mirror, and stared astonished at her face reflected in the glass.

III

DURING the days that followed she endeavoured to search out the changes in herself that had made of her a different woman, one so altered that this man, with whom she had once known the extremes of emotional experience—the delight of young dreams, the fulfilment, the heartbreak of disillusion—found her a stranger.

She exaggerated the physical changes revealed in her mirror, bitterly accusing herself of growing old, as if it were a willed act, persuaded herself that all traces of the young girl had vanished like a spilled perfume—but the sense of incredulity persisted.

Meanwhile, she saw him again, took dinner with him as she had promised. During this meeting they came to know each other better, that is, on their new basis. With the confusion of the first surprise gone, she found herself able to ask questions more intelligently; she learned something of his life during the years of their separation. He never spoke of having once been married.

They were seated in a conventional fashionable restaurant, receiving the usual indifferent service. The place was crowded. Young women and men drifted with nonchalant airs to their tables—boys who gallantly expended a week's earnings on a single dinner. Now and then the woman felt a genuine pride in the appearance of her com-

panion, who managed a better air than any of the men about him.

He talked quietly, charmingly, leaning over the table just enough to give the intimate touch.

She wondered what he had ever done to bring her so much pain, the pain she could still remember, that came with the end of their life together. The facts—of course she recalled them, but they were trivial now, ridiculously insufficient. His little affair with another girl—it seemed so trivial in perspective!

He was telling her of his life in Europe. He said he had left the United States when a young man—"just before I was thirty, and after a great disappointment," he told her.

"The war forced me back," he explained. "But I can't take up the old threads. I've grown to be a European, I suppose. Can't accustom myself to my own people."

"Do you find it so different?"

"Everything is different. Especially the women!"

She laughed.

"Then we're not all daughters of the same Eve?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"I guess the difference is no more than superficial," he said. "But it's enough to upset an old man with fixed habits. I understand now the complaints of one of my young French friends, who returned from a trip to America with many discontented memories. He was frank enough to admit that he never had any success as a lover of American girls. He complained that the technique of success was too brutal, too abrupt for him; he was accustomed to the slow, interesting progress one makes in trying to interest a French woman. Men and women spar more in Europe, you know. When you finally kiss the girl, it's because she really loves you. . . ."

Then he added something about being beyond all that himself. The woman laughed. She wanted to ask him about his own experiences, but she feared certain revelations that might concern herself. Now that they were establishing a wholly new acquaintance, she shrank from anything that might discover her, make her known to him.

It was an agreeable evening, but after she returned, alone again in her apartment, she found herself depressed once more. Again the sense of shameful age, a change that brought with it an irrational accusing, enveloped her like a sable cloak. He had been with her for hours, and still he did not know her, found nothing in her to recall the girl who had discovered her dreams in his presence and who, in her turn, must have given him certain visions of his own.

They had neglected to arrange for another meeting and in her depressed mood she avoided any accidental encounter on the street. But one evening he called, apologizing for his coming without any word.

"I saw the lights in your windows," he said. "Thought you might be alone and willing to talk to me."

They sat down in the living-room and presently his charm soothed away her depression; she was happy again.

Presently then, braving the question that had been eager but unspoken on her lips when they dined together, she asked him about the women he had known.

"You spoke of your friends the other night," she said. "But you didn't breathe a word about yourself. Imagine how curious I am!"

For several seconds he was silent.

With a slow movement he placed the cigarette he was smoking in the tray she had put at his hand. He leaned back a little in his chair; his attitude was reminiscent.

"I have only one memory that's worth telling," he said. "It's been my single, great sentimentality."

She smiled her encouragement.

"Perhaps that is because the best things come to us when we're young. They seem the best, anyway. After you're disillusioned the sharp zest is gone out of old delights."

He took up his cigarette again.

"It didn't happen when I was in

Europe at all," he continued. "In fact, the woman was—my wife!"

Mrs. Brinton uttered a little cry, the involuntary expression of her sudden surprise, but covered it with a laugh, forced out between her immobile lips. He joined her with his own quiet laughter.

"I told you it was a great sentimentality," he said.

"But I had no idea you were married!" she found herself exclaiming.

"No, I *was*. I remember my wife as the sweetest of all the women I ever found. I lost her because I was so infernally young, there was such a zest in life; being in love with her made me terribly curious about other women."

Mrs. Brinton nodded, but kept her face averted. She pressed her knees tightly against her hands that lay in her lap. It seemed to her then that this effort of listening, this quiet pose in her chair, would at any instant demand too much of her strength; she would scream, she would run out of the room. Even now she was afraid that his ears would catch the fast pulsing of her heart.

But he was looking down at the floor, unconscious. A swift glance found him smiling, curiously. She wondered a moment at the quality of his smile; it seemed to imply more than the sentimental memories he evoked.

"You understand? I was foolish enough to meet some little flapper outside, concealing it from my wife. The flapper was so unimportant that I've forgotten her name, forgotten her face. We saw a hundred like her, no doubt, in the restaurant the other night. Well, I was discovered; I suppose I was idiotically careless and indiscreet. It should have been a comedy; my own little girl should have punished me by denying one of her kisses, which would have been wholly adequate in reality. Instead, she couldn't understand. It turned out to be a disaster. She separated from me, proved her case, and got her divorce.

"It wasn't in the beginning that I realized how much she meant, but later; her memory grew. I had a chance to compare her with others. After I had gone to Europe I tried to find out where she was living and how, so that I could write, help her perhaps, try to take up the thread again. My letters never reached her. But she was the sweetest one; it's useless for me to tell you about anyone else. . . ."

He raised his face and their eyes met. He was smiling again, the puzzling smile she had seen a moment before, with implications she did not understand.

For an instant the smile seemed to hold an invitation, an acknowledgment of understanding, and the woman, her lips parted a little, gave herself up to the exchanged glances, forgetting the pretence she maintained. An old, giddy warmth came back to her, so long forgotten that it had the startling presence of a ghost, the warmth of another time. He broke the spell with a laugh.

"Do you find it very incredible?" he asked.

She was silent. He arose, crossed the room, and began to examine a print on the wall. She forced herself to speak—some trivial question. The conversation was resumed in a different channel. Later they parted formally.

IV

He was gone, but the woman was exultant.

Her assurance was restored and augmented like a tide returning. She felt young; the stir and expectancy of romance ran in her veins as a fluid more potent than blood. She remembered the half-forgotten delights, sweetnesses that came back thrillingly inasmuch as their enactment seemed to have the chance of another birth. Again she lived through the range of her former emotions, feeling once more all the joy, all the pain. The last was done; the cycle returned to delight again.

How glad he would be when he realized that he had found her once more—"the sweetest one."

She would make no haste to tell him! To linger unknown was to augment the emotions that would come in the instant of revealment. Perhaps he himself would discover; that would be better; surely he must! She was the same woman, her heart was unchanged.

She visioned the second beginning of their romance—like the first. The flirtation, the growing eagerness, the first kiss. When he kissed her, if he still remained blind, she would tell him.

For a time she stood by the window in the room which he had just left. The blind was drawn, but a little breeze blew in from the street, moving the curtain rhythmically. It smelt of young leaves, new life.

She crossed the room, switched out the light, and entered her bedroom. Languorously she approached her mirror and glanced at her face, without any intention of doing so.

She saw the features so familiar in these latter days.

Once more the changes of twenty-five years were reflected back with their accusing bitterness. She drew away, startled, but, unable to resist, stared at the mirrored face again.

Then her folly of the past hour was apparent; of course he did not know her. To tell him would shock him and take away the sweet recollections of his early dreams. It was not this image that his memory recorded, but another face, the young girl's.

She drew back from the glass, closing and unclosing the fingers of her hands, that hung at her sides. He must never know, never guess. At best, he would only laugh at her. They had both grown old—an impossible romance!

A strange calmness came to her. As if her mind had been cleared from an obscuring haze she saw the easiest course. She would go away, at once, to-morrow, and their intimacy would stop in its inception. The days were beginning to grow warm. It was a good time to leave for the mountains or the shore, and, returning in the Autumn, she could find another flat.

As if to delay the least partial execution of her determination would be to hazard some disaster, she walked to the closet and began pulling out her frocks. She opened the lid of her trunk, lifted the trays from their grooves.

And she would never let him see her again. . . .

And then, in the midst of her preparations, she saw him again seated opposite her, making his confession . . . "the sweetest one." Once more she found the curious smile on his face, that seemed to imply an understanding —a mutual *conspiracy!*

That explicating word startled her. A silk sweater, taken from the trunk, dropped out of her hands, falling in a soft, amorphous heap at her feet. She straightened her body, stared across at the wall.

Slowly her eyes widened. Did his smile mean—? It must! Anything else was too incredible. She recalled other little betraying instances. Then he had recognized her from the first day; what a delightful bit of sparring he believed they had had together! Now it was over, and he would add his present respect to his old memories. How characteristic of him! Truly, he had always been a charming, clever fellow.

She bent down and picked up the silk sweater. She continued her packing. She both smiled and sighed.

IN YOUR EYES

By Ned Hungerford

THE woods at dawn,
Before the dew
Has dripped into the earth—
This is the gladness
In your eyes—

The woods at night,
When rain drops down
Upon the fallen leaves—
This is the sadness
In your eyes—

SHE loved an idealist, married an optimist and buried a pessimist.

A BEAUTIFUL woman smiled at a young girl's fiancé. The devil bit another nick in his pitchfork handle.

LOVE, my dear, is me in terms of you.

WHEN the devil leaves the house, Love sneezes and puts his feet in a hot mustard bath.

LOVE is the little Bolshevik of the emotions. Marriage is his Ellis Island.

PREMONITION

By A. I. Jenkins.

MRS. DOUGLAS ANDERSON had a peculiar feeling about the neighbour next door. To term the sensation either fear or disgust would be an exaggeration, yet it savoured a little of both. In what way the impression of mystification had been given was elusive, for although some of the woman's actions were unusual they did not furnish sufficient reason why Mrs. Anderson should concern herself. She had varied interests even though she was living in a small town. Anyway, she had lived in the city a sufficient number of years to acquire the indifference typical of the city bred.

Mrs. Anderson had been a bit more sophisticated at the time of her marriage than the social circle in which the marriage had placed her would approve. More sophisticated perhaps than Douglas Anderson himself might have cared to know. Therefore she did not tell him. Besides, she had decided to take the backward road of life, to cast aside her acquired tastes and characteristics and resume those with which birth and early training had endowed her. This was why she had deliberately closed her eyes to the slight heaviness of Douglas Anderson's nature and clung to her determination to marry him.

His money influenced her in an honest degree. She realized that she was more likely to make their marriage a success, to combat, with better chance of victory, any lingering desire for the foam and froth of life if she were placed in a position that made demands on her dignity as the wife of a solid citizen and leading business man of the town.

Up to the present time, ten months after the wedding, she had met these demands admirably. Her reward was an increasing respect for her husband's sterling qualities and a growing interest in his friends who had seemed, at first, well—a trifle amusing.

She discovered that people in a small town were no longer out of touch with the world. Their automobiles ate up distances too readily to leave them longing when things worth while beckoned only three hours away. Actually they saw and heard more of the things worth while than many city people who were not obliged to make even the three-hour effort and so made none at all.

To go back to the woman next door. Mrs. Anderson caught a glimpse of her this morning as she bustled about the downstairs rooms of her house, the windows of which had all been opened and the curtains pinned back preliminary to a general cleaning.

Mrs. Anderson had opened her own windows for the same purpose, preparing for Mrs. Hobbs, who came twice a week to do the work that the regular maid considered outside her province. Mrs. Anderson always cordially agreed with those ladies of her ten months' acquaintance who asserted that the help problem in a small town was even greater than in the city. She felt sure they must be right, so why explain that such difficulties had not been within the range of her experiences since hotel apartments are automatically attended to and cafés are open at all hours.

Returning to the woman in the next house—the two smiled and nodded to each other across the lawn glistening in the early morning sun. The distance

between them was a little too great to span genteelly with the voice, especially when they had never been introduced.

By the way, why had they never been introduced? Why had the neighbourly call, which Mrs. Anderson was justified in expecting, been withheld? Her memories of such things might be somewhat dimmed, but it seemed to her that the neighbourliness that she remembered had included short, informal calls in the morning hours, an exchange of embroidery patterns and cake recipes, a hundred small tokens of interest and kindly feeling. Obviously she could not, as a newcomer, open negotiations for such pleasant intercourse, and just as obviously her neighbour did not intend to do so.

The woman appeared to be in good standing with the "best" people. At least Mrs. Anderson had seen such representative women as Mrs. Potter and Mrs. Nichols bow to her on the street and noted the cordial response to her smile accorded by Mr. Hooper, the banker. Yet no one ever went to her house and no one invited her out. Mrs. Anderson never met her at any of the half dozen weekly teas, bridge parties, literary or musical afternoons. She did not even know her name. Of course that could be easily learned. Just a question dropped almost anywhere, a simple query put to her own husband, for Mrs. Anderson had seen Douglas raise his hat and pause an instant one morning when the woman was in her front yard, and though they apparently exchanged no words, the smile with which Mr. Anderson was favoured was peculiarly direct and significant even to a distant observer. There was also an odd hesitancy in Mr. Anderson's manner at the time and the expression of his face was different from any his wife had ever noted there before.

She was the only close neighbour, it chanced. Mr. Anderson, desiring space, had built his house on the edge of town and with the one exception, the property near by was unimproved. The main highway to the city passed the door, but at a comfortable distance. A stretch of lawn well shrubbed and bordered at the roadside with big maple trees gave seclusion and protection from the noise.

To revert to the neighbour. Had Mrs. Anderson ever seen her before they lived side by side? She thought not. The woman might have seen her, possibly midst surroundings quite different from those in which she was to be found at the present time. The thought was not particularly disturbing. There was a comfortable certainty in Mrs. Anderson's mind that it made little difference how many of her husband's acquaintances had previously known her by sight. The times and places when her mode of conduct might have failed to conform with village ideas of propriety had been judiciously chosen. Any in that company had been, of necessity, of it. Pretty secure was Mrs. Anderson, she meditated.

II

"I JUST want to know can I go home to-night," petitioned Nettie, the maid, thrusting her head in at the door, "I can get everything ready for breakfast before I go an'—"

"The 'phone is ringing," interrupted Mrs. Anderson, and Nettie's head was withdrawn. It reappeared a moment later.

"It's Mr. Anderson and he wants to talk to you."

Mrs. Anderson responded promptly. Douglas did not like to be kept waiting.

"Very well, dear. Certainly I will. Not this time, thank you just the same. All right—good-bye."

Thus Mrs. Anderson in reply to a request that she pack her husband's bag and have Albert call for him with the car right away, as he must make a trip to the city, and wouldn't she like to go with him as he might be gone two or three days.

Albert on the way, Mrs. Anderson was again reminded by Nettie that the question of a leave of absence still pended.

"Yes, you may go," consented Mrs. Anderson. "Mr. Anderson will be away so you needn't bother about breakfast."

Nettie, with her own interests at heart, checked a suggestion that with Mr. Anderson, Albert and herself away, Mrs. Anderson would be left alone. Probably the missus didn't mind anyway. She didn't look like the scary kind. If she wanted her to, likely Mrs. Hobbs would stay. Mrs. Hobbs was on hand and hard at it.

Mrs. Anderson strolled out and waited under one of the maples near the road to wave good-bye to her husband. She looked so pretty standing there that he could not pass with a farewell no closer than a salute of the hand, and ordered Albert to stop.

"Wish you were going," he said as he edged her behind the tree out of sight of Albert and kissed her, to discover that he had backed her into full view of Mrs. Hobbs, airing draperies on the front porch.

"Never mind her," comforted Mrs. Anderson. "I didn't like to disappoint Mrs. Nichols, she has a bridge party this afternoon."

"Next time then," declared Mr. Anderson fondly, working her around to a new angle, "Good-bye."

He kissed her once more, this time with their sole neighbour as spectator, and blushing, hurried back to the car. Mrs. Anderson saw him lift his hat to the neighbour as he passed—saw her amused smile in response and noted again her peculiarly significant expression.

That evening Mrs. Anderson settled down to the enjoyment of a magazine, rather grateful for the peaceful silence of the house. Darkness came and she lit the piano lamp beside her. It cast a soft, golden glow within a small radius, leaving the farther reaches of the room in shadows.

When she tossed the magazine aside and looked at her wrist watch it was ten o'clock, the favourite bedtime of most of the villagers. A glance at the house next door showed the light already transferred from the first floor to the second.

Mrs. Anderson smiled a little to herself, remembering that a few months ago it would have been the hour for beginning, not ending, the evening. How would it seem to pass a night in the old way again? Had she been quite ready after all to say good-bye to that life? Or had she, temporarily jaded, been frightened into a premature renunciation—alarmed by the thought that, if she tarried too long, escape might be difficult or even impossible.

Such misgivings seemed absurd now. She had rebounded so quickly, her strong body unimpaired, her youth still clamorous within her. However, she was not sorry she had played safe. If life was a bit slow at times she resolutely prodded her judgment into laying out for fresh approval the display of good reasons why speed is less desirable as a steady gait than moderation.

She took up a partly-embroidered scarf and began work on it. An hour later she heard a light step on the porch. Startled, she held her needle poised for a moment and listened, then courageously stepped to the French doors and pushed the drapery to one side.

Her face almost touched the face of a man. With a little cry she fell back, then laughed softly and opened the door.

"Hello, Tom," she said.

In reply he cupped his hands, turned toward the road and shouted,

"This is the place!"

At the answering din Mrs. Anderson caught her breath in consternation. The decorous night was suddenly turned into an orgy of sound. Above the other voices she could hear Vi Westerlund's, and Vi, with Chet Saunders, was the first to come into view. The pair were executing a shimmy down the path.

"Thought you were hidden, didn't you?" Tom was mocking. "You haven't given me my kiss yet."

In spite of her resistance he corrected the alleged oversight.

The wave of resentment that swept over her as his lips pressed hers revealed to Mrs. Anderson in a swift moment how far she had travelled on the backward road.

Evelyn Waters and Dick Day overtook and passed Vi and her partner, Evelyn rushing up and grabbing Mrs. Anderson in a tempestuous embrace.

"Hello, old dear, think you could get away from the old bunch?" she paraphrased Tom's question.

There was a third couple, and with shrieks of laughter and raillery not too delicately chosen, the entire company trooped up Douglas Anderson's steps. Mrs. Anderson cast one despairing look toward the house next door. This, her inner consciousness told her, was the answer. This was the thing fate had been holding in store and of which intuition had warned her. Premonition, that uncanny, never-failing guide, had whispered that in the hands of this woman next door her destiny would sometime lie. The time had come and Mrs. Anderson had no doubt of the result.

A whisper from those lips that always smiled so maddeningly, of a visit late at night from friends, evidently intimates, who were anything but a credit to Douglas Anderson's wife—and this in Douglas Anderson's absence! Lost, then, the careful work of ten months, and worse by far, lost forever the opportunity to win to the safe haven of respectability.

With nervous haste Mrs. Anderson ushered her guests inside and closed the doors, though aware that closed doors could not muffle the boisterousness of Tom Austin's crowd.

"My word, how perfectly sweet!" shrilled Vi, pointing to the chair beside the reading lamp, draped with the bit of fancy work.

"Charter member of the Fireside Sitters League," chortled Dick. "Where's the deacon, Cleo?"

Howls of derision met the reply that he had gone to the city. Tom pounded from the piano weird Oriental dance music understood to be descriptive of Mr. Anderson's pastime while away from home.

"It's a duck of a dump," pronounced Evelyn, back from a tour of the house, "reminds me of Pat's."

"Remember how I swung you down over the balcony one night at Pat's, Cleo?" demanded Tom.

Mrs. Anderson remembered. Half a dozen arms had been stretched out for her and perched on masculine shoulders she had been taken on a triumphal march. Evenings were not spent quite that way among her present associates.

"And the night you and Vi hid in the fireplace to see what a stag party was like?"

"And hear!" amended Vi, "we were never the same afterward."

"That was because of the price we made you pay when we found you," explained Tom. "Shall I tell 'em, Cleo?"

"Go ahead," permitted Vi with languid indifference.

But Tom's gaze was fastened curiously on Mrs. Anderson's face where, to his eyes, accustomed as they had long been to read the lights and shadows there, torment was ill concealed. He had been aware of the reluctance of that compulsory kiss.

At two o'clock Mrs. Anderson spread a buffet supper with weary apologies for its incompleteness.

"We have the trimmings in the car," Chet suggested, and a stampede followed. Only Mrs. Anderson and Tom remained behind. As the night was once more turned into tumult Mrs. Anderson dropped her head in her hands. Tom gazed at her with thoughtful eyes. Indifferent to his observation she rose and crossed to the window.

There was no light in the house next door—there wouldn't be, of course, but a curtain stirred by the breeze showed a casement opened wide. Mrs. Anderson could almost see the figure she was certain knelt beside it—could feel the eyes that searched, and sense the ears that heard. Tom had followed and now laid his hand on her arm.

"I'm sorry, Cleo," he apologized. "I had a hunch you wanted to cut us out. I was a bit sore but I had no business to do it. It won't happen again."

"I think this once will be enough," replied Mrs. Anderson, lifting a wan face that wore a smile tinged with bitterness.

When Mrs. Anderson's guests left at four o'clock, Tom did what he could to get them away quietly, but even higher than the voices of the men rose those of the three women, unmistakably thick and beyond control, the last morsel that the town would wish for rolling under its tongue.

III

DOUGLAS ANDERSON returned to his home the next day.

"You look tired, didn't you sleep well?" he inquired with earnest anxiety of his pale, unsmiling wife.

"Not very." She hid her face against his coat-sleeve and for a moment allowed herself the comfort of his sheltering arm, then drew away and faced her defeat.

"Douglas, who is the woman next door? What is her name?"

"Her name? Why, don't you know her name? Don't you know who she is? She's Mrs. Soules. Haven't you ever noticed how queer she looks? She's deaf and dumb, you know."

FORESIGHT.

By John Temple

SHE listened as he talked.

"I am rich," he said. "If you marry me, my money, my motor cars, my yacht, my houses, everything will be yours."

"Fine!" she exclaimed delightedly, then her brow clouded.

"But what will *you* do?" she asked.

THE most sublime force in life is hatred. To love is to surrender; to hate is to carry on. A man who hated dirt took the first bath.

NOTHING is more charming than a pretty wife, but if you want real love, marry a plain girl with a broken heart.

IT was Delicia's most hated rival who spread the story about her surpassing virtue and modesty.

THE REASON

By Dennison Varr

HE was a man who seemed to thrive and wax on cosmetics. He was always buying skin lotions, and tooth washes, and shampoo oils. But his principal obsession was hair tonic. Of this he used prodigious quantities, compounded of many varieties of ingredients, and differing from one another considerably in colour, odour and turbidity. In fact, all the brands he used had little in common save that they all contained about forty per cent. of alcohol.

OH, PRAY SHE PLUCK NOT LIGHTLY!

By A. Newberry Choyce

THERE is a lad in our village
Whom you would care to see:
As proud as any wild thing
That leaps along the lea.

Straight hair he has and clean eyes
And lips to love a song,
And fragrant by his heart's track
The dreams grow sweetly long.

And from a neighbour threshold
Or from a place you know,
The small sure feet a maid has,
Will find a path to go.

Oh, pray she pluck not lightly
Along his holy place!
I would not have my lad lose
The God from out his face.

THE INEVITABLE EVE

By Edith Chapman

STANTON'S first impression on entering the apartment was of its emptiness, of its having hastily pulled itself together. There was a smell of closeness, not the usual fragrance with which his cousin contrived to invest every habitat that held her for even the length of twelve hours.

He looked about him scrutinizingly. Everything was in its place. Nothing served to explain that sense of unfamiliarity which still slightly oppressed him.

He felt for his cigarettes and lighted one. It was a long time since he had seen the Creightons. Nina had been consistently neglecting him for some months. Evidently she had felt no need for that "mental stimulus" which, she claimed, he yielded her.

Matters other than intellectual had been absorbing her, from what he had heard. At such crises she treated their platonic alliance to the preoccupied indifference which he, unreasonably, resented. But why, then, had he been abruptly summoned from the other end of town on a hot August night? What was she doing in town anyway at this time?

On recognizing her voice over the telephone he had felt, for the first time, a faint annoyance mingling with his surprise. After all, it was so far and so hot! To be sure she made pleasant scenery. But he had innumerable, handier resources for decorating his landscape. And to have to listen to Arthur's platitudes for a whole midsummer's evening!

He frankly loathed Arthur. Complacent, brainless, obese. It made him almost dislike Nina to be obliged to think of her as the man's wife. How could she have done it?

The maid who had let him in came back with a shaker of Martinis. He discovered, on tasting them, that they were his particular dry kind. Arthur had never had a hand in mixing them. He always succeeded in giving, even to a Martini, a soft, flabby taste. He took the crimp out of everything.

The cocktails relaxed Stanton a bit. He stretched himself in a chair and looked out at the park lake. In the west somewhere the sun was presumably setting, for the water had caught the reflection. A subtle content spread in him. Was it the vermouth; was it a gradual, hardly yet admitted appreciation that on this particular evening he was not to be subjected to the irritant of Creighton's company?

So then the place had been closed? She was merely in town overnight, or something like. But why? What was she up to? His thin lips curled about the amber cigarette holder. Whatever her motives—and the powers defend that he should ever have to keep tab of them!—they two were booked for a pleasant evening, one of their old, delightful, congenial evenings together. He brightened to the prospect.

Nina was a charming woman. He was grateful for whatever chance had brought her to town. And he thanked God also that his part would involve nothing more strenuous than that of pawn. His main surety for this was that, all these years, he never *had* been featured. His relationship with Nina he considered about the most ideal pos-

sible. Nothing exigent or fatiguing. Friendship, simon-pure. What nice hours they had passed together! Ten years back he had begun retailing to her his various adventures, not from any need to confess, but for the sake of that listening look of humour and relish with which her face responded.

What odd confessions she had made to him, too! He had never known a woman so little squeamish about the truth. There was no fact of others or herself—however sordid, however unbeautiful—which, once perceiving, she would decline to admit. Her hawk-look was not for nothing, that cold glint of acumen which never shifted in her large, sensual eyes. . . . Where the devil was she?

She would come in and, of course, instantly draw out the two pins which were all that ever constrained her magnificent hair. This was a favourite trick of hers and, of her many gestures, the most puerile. Yet she never omitted it.

She was vainer of her hair than of anything else. It was almost pathological, her positive compulsion to show it off, even to people like him, who had been thus indulged not less than a hundred times. He could visualize the long, apparently unpremeditated reach of her arms upward to accomplish this manœuvre, on her face meanwhile that foreign expression of intense infantile interest which was in such flagrant contrast to her general inscrutability. For Nina was *not* infantile; she suggested, in no sense, the child.

She was a singularly graceful woman: that way she had of raising her arms, of moving about. And her finesse for perfumes! No crudeness there! He had never known anyone who selected scents more surely, or assimilated them more completely. Within the radius of her presence one couldn't, for all her vagaries, dislike her. . . . How long she kept one waiting!

As he swallowed off his third cocktail he got the tocsin of her arrival, a singularly aggressive new scent. It upset his speculations. She appeared to him, after his long absence, as immoderately tall and thin and pale.

"I hope you don't mind having dinner with me alone," she asked him. "Arthur is at Lake Forest. I just came down for a couple of days."

"No, I don't mind in the least; politeness forbids me to be more emphatic; but how did you happen to remember me?"

"I came down to see you." She looked at him frankly with her probing, dense gaze. "I got to thinking about you one day last week. I wondered what you were doing. It's so long since we've seen each other. What *are* you doing? The same ugly grind? Why don't you give up such things? You look seedy."

During dinner she retailed to him all sorts of gossip without the least malice and with her inimitable racy, slightly vulgar, *sangfroid*. There was no one like her to wring the humour from a situation down to the last vapour. His laugh broke out more and more often, that choked silent laugh of the academic man. It was as if he disliked committing even his amusement to anything so didactic as expression.

She was very beautiful to-night, for all her attenuation, which the lines of her gown only sought to emphasize. He blessed Arthur for being absent. But why, on this all too short respite—as it must seem to her—was she throwing away one whole evening on *him?* He couldn't explain this point to himself. He reverted to it when they were back in the library.

"How did you come to ask me to-night?"

Above her lighted cigarette, her bland gray eyes shone out at him like two polar, remote stars.

"I told you. I wanted to see you. You seemed to have forgotten me."

"I shan't forget you," he said warmly. "How could I? Aren't we related?"

"Yes, but so tenuously," and an adorable stutter of amusement drowned her last word.

He moved his chair nearer.

"Nina, I ran into Scotty this afternoon."

"Did you?" Then, cryptically, "Scotty and I are off. Besides, I never liked him really. He has no sense of humour."

"What did you expect of an ex-polo player?"

"Nothing."

Her eyes seemed to have permanently settled on him in that unpardonable steadfastness, the temerity of which was one of her great attractions. They reminded him of a cat's, not in any invidious sense, but physiologically. In the same manner, within their large green iris, the little black dart of a pupil seemed to shift about. They had grown very glossy and compact. He observed how the lids had been darkened and the eyelashes pencilled. This was a new trick. "What did you mean, a minute ago, by saying you wouldn't forget me?"

"That."

"How do you know?"

"Oh, one doesn't forget you. You're too entertaining."

Meanwhile he wondered what her game was, but didn't greatly care.

"Is that my chief interest for you—entertainment?"

"Yes, I think so. Or call it—friendship."

She sighed. "That's what I was afraid of."

"Afraid of what?" He stiffened a little.

"I don't think I like being—an entertainment. I should prefer to be entertained."

"Well, don't I do that for you?"

"Besides," ignoring this, "such a tie is so precarious. If you didn't forget me, these last months, it's only by a miracle. And I don't like trusting to miracles."

She reached out her hand and laid it whimsically on his knee.

He took it and held it a moment, blinking at it; then he firmly laid it back again. They both laughed.

"What," he inquired, "is the big idea?"

She scowled a little, but with no ill-humour.

"It isn't big; rather call it circumscribed. I am curious to know why you've never made love to me. It has really quite worried me. The idea that I might be actually repulsive to you entered my head the other night. I couldn't sleep. I decided to come to town and find out."

During this speech his whole form had grown rigid with unmistakable resentment.

"Did Scotty leave such a vacuum in your life," he brought out brutally, "that you had to resort to me?"

She refused to take offence. "Damn Scotty!"

He watched her stern, subtle face; he noticed that her breathing was straining beneath the tight silk of her gown. Was it possible that she was serious?

"Since we *have* something rather valid, I'd like to keep it, if it's all the same to you."

"And that is?" Her voice could flood with insolence when she liked. One had no comeback against it.

"Our friendship," he offered it lamely, as if no very certain quantity. Indeed, in the last few moments, it had seemed to recede more and more into the region of the purely theoretical. "What's the use of throwing it over, after ten years?"

She didn't answer him, but began to draw steadily at her cigarette. He watched the red tip as long as seemed practicable. Then he spoke. "Well?"

"Oh, all right. Only I wanted to know."

He was utterly bewildered. The situation seemed to have been saved, but whether by him or by her he couldn't determine. What had happened had been too swift for him.

"It has always seemed to me so fantastic," she was saying, "the way, those ten years, we've been going on."

"Or haven't," he amended. He was

by now as cool as she was, with an added hauteur of suspicion.

She laughed softly. "It's rather nice though. We both have our cake and eat it. A kind of permanent feast. Well, it *takes* a philosopher to originate that kind of scheme. However, it's very nice."

He rose. "I'm sure you agree with me that it's really the best possible." He held out his hand.

Her own slid coolly into his, with no reminiscence of its former leaping out. Her look was bland and steady. "Good-night; we'll have another feast before too long."

From his hand rose the scent which her touch invariably left. "Why do you use such devilish perfume?" he asked irritably. "I smell like a harem and I hardly touched your hand."

"I'm sorry." Her eyes were very still and bright; in them the pupils seemed to be wheeling about again. He felt, with a profound amazement, that he had begun to tremble.

Inside his brain one word kept repeating itself. Cake! What had she said about cake? Something about having it and eating it, too. . . .

"After all, why not eat it?" he asked hoarsely.

As his arms closed round her, the wheeling eyes grew still, the lids dropped. Seeing which, he instantly let go of her, in fact appeared almost to thrust her off from him. In another minute he had definitely made his exit.

Once down in the vestibule he flicked the powder from his coat-sleeve with vindictive slaps. He was angry to the roots of his self-esteem. As he strode down the street there crossed his mind the inelegant phrase with which one man had described her:

"She's the *damndest* woman I've ever known."

EVERY cynic has his sentimental moments and admits that there is one woman who is different. As always, he is wrong.

WHEN a man praises his wife's good sense it is a sign that he is going to tell her something that will give it an awful strain.

THE chief difference between man and woman is that man hopes and woman remembers.

TO find a liar, look out of the nearest window. To find another, look into the nearest mirror.

THE GIRL WHO ACCEPTED NO COMPROMISE

By Oscar Lewis

I

WE were feeling very well toward the world. Norwick's dinner had been good, his cigars were excellent, and the view from his veranda was undeniably superior. The sunset had mellowed to a cool, limpid twilight. Below us Monterey bay lay like a sheet, its undulating surface unbroken. Only once or twice a year, Norwick assured us, could one see this glassy illusion. The Pacific out there, meddling old dowager, always stepped in after a few hours and put an end to it. She hated repose, the Pacific. He remembered once, though, when the bay had been thus for a solid week; without a ripple—as if someone had spilled a million barrels of oil upon its surface. That, added Norwick, regarding his cigar end, was back in 1913—during the summer when the New Eden colony was established.

We others exchanged interested glances.

During the seven years that had passed since that New Eden affair, none of us had heard Norwick mention the subject. There had been enough said at the time, to be sure, and for months after, by the newspapers and by others, and Norwick's name had been mentioned as often as anyone's. But from Norwick himself there had been nothing but silence.

Was it possible now, we wondered, that Norwick was about to give us his version of the New Eden colony; clear up the secret of his own connection with it? That part, at least, had always been a mystery. And the Matlin girl—surely she had never been adequately explained! We maintained a sympathetic, expectant silence.

Norwick seemed in no great hurry to start. His eyes dwelt upon the bay's surface. He leaned over and deposited the ash from his cigar in the tray upon the rail of the veranda, then resumed his study of the bay. He drew a deep breath; in anyone but Norwick it would have been termed a sigh. When at last he started talking he plunged at once into the centre of things.

"Even now, after seven years," said he, "I'm convinced that the idea behind the movement was sound. They were a group of fanatics, if you care to call them that; I'll not quarrel with you on that score. Certainly they were impractical enough, and all of them, except one, lacked courage—except one, I say. There is no doubt that the Matlin girl was brave."

Norwick hesitated, then started on a new tack.

"The entire group went at the thing wrong, of course; deliberately invited derision and ridicule. There was the name, for instance; the New Eden. What an opportunity for the newspaper humorists! And how little they made of the opportunity; not a single good wheeze, after all their sweating. They did much better work with me. I was the gull who backed the show; the hick who paid Pan while the counterfeit pagans danced. It must have been a good show—from the outside. Perhaps

you will be interested in hearing the truth about it; that is, so far as I can tell you. I hardly know where to begin, though."

"Suppose," said young Rogers, after a silence, "that you start with the—the Matlin girl." His voice, we thought, seemed to be held under a slight tension. "I met her once, eight years ago, for half an hour. She impressed me—a lot. I can't say that I've managed to forget her."

Norwick continued gazing at the bay.

"She is not one," said he, in a dispassionate tone, "who is easily forgotten. One knows her, even casually; she passes on, and a month later one still has a sharp impression of her. A year passes—eight years, and it's the same. There's something almost terrifying about the permanence of her influence. And it's not easily explained. She was not one of those women with blatant, 'powerful personalities,' you'll admit that, Rogers?"

"She," said Rogers, "was like a child. One couldn't possibly think of her as mature; casting her first ballot—that sort of thing. She seemed to have a sort of permanent hold on youth; like a goddess. Her face—" Young Rogers broke off abruptly, regarding us with some embarrassment. "Anyhow, she was a deucedly good-looking girl!"

Norwick didn't join in the smile that swept around the circle. His eyes remained dwelling upon the bay. That unruffled sheet of water seemed to fascinate him.

"I've told you," he continued, "of the time the bay here was smooth for a week. Seven full days and not a yard of broken water to be seen from end to end. It was during those seven days that the New Eden colony went to smash; broke into a thousand pieces. Gavin Wendell, the High Prophet, you remember, told the newspapers that it was a mere temporary suspension. He knew better; the thing was dead—there was not the remotest possibility of ever re-establishing it. That High Prophet business was another mistake; if Wendell had been called what he really was, the Chairman of the Board of Trustees— But let that pass.

"The thing, I say, was dead, because the motive force behind it was gone. If you will look into the history of these freak cults you will learn some interesting things. Some day we will have this subject properly treated—if I have to write the book myself! For one thing, there's a dominant personality behind each movement; when it is removed the thing drops like an inverted kite. Dowie, Brigham Young, Mrs. Eddy, Bryanism—extend the list as far as you will. But somewhere in it you will have to include Morgan Matlin."

"It strikes me as appropriate, somehow—that name Morgan," said Rogers. "It always has."

"Perhaps you have never heard," answered Norwick, "that her grandfather was the scientist who carried on the cholera investigations a number of years ago. Morgan's definite media, you know. He was decorated for it in Vienna in 1906, and died there later. Her father taught economics in some university in the South; became addicted to the current brand of radicalism —Socialism, I believe it was—and was hurled out by the regents. He edited Labour papers, ran for governor, and left finally, I think, for Trinidad to enrol the asphalt diggers in the One Big Union. Persons who knew him say that he was a wonderfully likeable chap. The girl Morgan, I remember, used to speak of him with a sort of affectionate tolerance. I think she was never quite able to forgive his conservatism.

"That gives a hint of the girl's doctrine. Later she changed it somewhat, as we shall see. But at no time did she overcome her abhorrence of half-way measures. No patching up of existing systems (that word 'systems'!) would do; sweep it all away and start again from the beginning. Adam and Eve, she used to say, had started in an ideal world—what an opportunity! And the reason they had made a mess of things was merely that they lacked background. To-day, with a record of six thousand years of blunders behind, the

New Eden could be a thing of permanence. Well, cults have been founded on less logical grounds.

"I was not here the summer the colony was started. When I returned in the fall the thing was already functioning. The land—they had two hundred acres, extending north from that second point—had been negotiated for through my agent. They had rented it for a year with the option of buying.

"The day after I returned the agent called here and cleared himself of any connection with the matter; he had thought it was to be a mere agricultural venture; had no idea of its real character, and so on. He was afraid, though, that I would have trouble getting them off; their lease was legal enough—which, he said, was a shame, for, if the newspapers were to be believed, astonishing things were going on. . . .

"I assured him that I had no intention of interfering. I let the matter rest for a few weeks, skipped most of the newspaper talk, and half the time was not even conscious that they were in the vicinity. They showed no disposition to disturb me. I may in time have forgotten their existence entirely had I not resumed an old practice of mine, that of riding on the beach for an hour before breakfast in the mornings.

"It was in this way that I first met the Matlin girl. We passed down there on the beach. She was walking along slowly, near the water's edge.

"She turned about as I came opposite and waved her hand; called good morning. It was all very natural and unaffected. On my way back a quarter of an hour later she beckoned me to stop. She had found a shell, a thing of rather peculiar design. I told her what I could about it. It interested her, just as most things did, and when I mentioned my collection she was eager to see it. She had seen the Monaco collection; showed an intelligent familiarity with it; had even heard of my own. Imagine that in a twenty-year-old girl! There is no great mystery about her influence; she was merely thoroughbred, a higher development, intrinsically superior.

"The following afternoon she appeared and we spent two hours over my specimen cases, and a day or so later, at her invitation, I visited the colony.

"It is unnecessary to say that the girl from the first moment made a sharp impression on me. I was frankly under the spell of that remarkable something in her personality. Our friendship began then and lasted throughout the two months that the colony remained in existence. Eight weeks. They were—well, among the most interesting of my lifetime. I've not spoken of it until to-day."

II

NORWICK relaxed again into his chair and smoked for a moment in silence.

"I had known her two weeks when the—misfortune had its first beginnings, though, of course, I didn't realize it then, or she either, perhaps, until weeks later. It is useless to try to look ahead in such matters. I have no doubt that it was inevitable from the first; in so far as anything may be said to be inevitable. She had a favourite retreat; you can see it from here, dimly, on that second headland, the little cleft near the top. It is completely secluded; one looks straight out to sea between two gnarled cypresses.

"We had sat there perhaps for an hour on that afternoon, for the most part without speech; she was not a great talker. Suddenly the winds, the dependable summer trades, stopped. They simply ceased; there was not a breath of air, not a zephyr. The silence was almost startling; we looked at each other. Then in a moment, very distinctly, from somewhere below we heard the sound of a baby crying, a querulous, long-drawn squall. It was an angry, spiteful sound. The wind shut down again and in a moment the familiar roar of the trees was with us once more.

"That crying infant? Well, it was in a squatter's house at the foot of the headland; a Cretian shrimp fisherman. It was a mere shack; I've since had it wiped out, every stick. It was surpris-

ing, the look of irritation that appeared on the Matlin girl's face at the sound of that crying child. She grimaced with distaste; her fastidious hands clasped about her knees, her lips pursed. Then almost brusquely she revived the conversation. In five minutes she was laughing; her eager, stirring self again.

"I have told you that she was unusual; in some basic way she was superior. That moment of irritation, that ruffling of her healthy serenity, remained in my mind, an incongruous touch. She herself referred to it, indirectly, as we climbed down again from the headland.

"'I heard it yesterday,' she said casually, 'for an hour. There was no wind. That wailing seemed—continuous.'

"'These Cretians,' I said. 'How they raise their young I don't know. How one in a thousand lives—'

"She had no reply; no shadow of interest in the subject. Uplift, that melancholy diversion, was a blank page to her. She did not scorn the lower orders; to her they simply did not exist within her horizon.

"The very fact that she had allowed herself even to become aware of the child was an incongruity. In her eyes it was a weakness. You see, she had deliberately built walls about herself; all of us do that, I suppose, to some extent. But hers were firm, inelastic. She took life too intensely, that was her trouble. And in order to live she had built her walls. Positively, she had shut out whole sections of life; denied its existence.

"And there was this sick baby, its strident wail forcing itself upon her irritated consciousness. There was something ruthless about that attack upon her complacency; something relentless and brutal. Not for a moment was the issue in doubt from the beginning.

"She continued to go each day to her retreat on the Point. To have stayed away, to have gone elsewhere, would have been an admission of defeat.

"Can you imagine a more preposterous situation? The girl prisoning herself there each day as an only means of retaining her complete liberty. I have said that she accepted no half-way measures; no compromise. She had created her horizon, that which lay beyond was not merely of no importance. She went beyond that; it did not exist for her, it simply was not. And day after day she went to the Point. It seemed to me that there was something stupendous about that battle.

"I have told you of the week of complete silence that settled upon the bay. There was not a ripple upon its surface. It was a calm; the wind had stopped. You know, we are unaccustomed to silences here upon the bay, and it grew oppressive. It is useless to say that the Matlin girl was not brave. I have wondered since if I should not have resorted to force; kidnapped her in the old high-handed fashion and locked her away until she could take a rational view of existing things. Instead I argued with her.

"'You can drive no bargain with Life,' I said, descending to platitudes. 'She is much too jealous a mistress. You cannot accept her with reservations; she sees to that. Sooner or later you accept all of her.'

"The baby down on the beach wailed querulously, seconding my arguments. It was appalling the hold that preposterous child had on life. There was no one who wished it to live. Its mother was dead; its father, out on the bay with his nets, had to row in at midday to give it the food from which it derived strength to continue its scornful challenge throughout the afternoon. The astonishing, superb arrogance of it!

"And up above, the Matlin girl sat looking out to sea. The air was so motionless, so clear, that the strident cries might have come from a spot but a dozen feet distant. Not by a word, a gesture, by no shade of her expression did she admit it was there. To have recognized the palpable fact of the baby would have meant capitulation; a swinging open of the gates to the whole sordid, shut-out pageant. I must re-

peat again that there was no compromise in her.

"That breathless week was slow in passing. The heat grew very noticeable; in the afternoons it was downright oppressive. That was because there was no wind. Rogers here has said that Morgan Matlin was like a child. She had that quality; it was noticeable then—the puzzled air of a perplexed child among unnoticing, self-centred strangers. I have sat with her through entire afternoons watching the same flat sheet of water and heard the quiet rent by those interminable, arrogant cries. It was not like witnessing a battle; I felt rather the ashamed feeling which must come to one who is present at an execution. There was no conversation; I am certain that most of the time she was unaware of my presence."

Norwick paused and suddenly leaned forward and nodded out across the bay.

"See," he said, "over there to the south-west. Look carefully—the wind is coming back."

We could see a distant slight agitation upon the bay's surface; a minute dimming of its mirrored smoothness. This tiny opaque spot travelled northward, widening in area, destroying our illusion of a glass bay.

"The calms seldom last more than a few hours," said Norwick. "In a moment now we shall have a breeze. It will freshen the atmosphere."

We sat for a time without speech. Rogers shifted in his chair; cleared his throat impatiently.

"You can see," resumed Norwick, "that it was not an even fight. It was not a fair fight. From the beginning the end was obvious. I have said that the Matlin girl was not one to make a bargain with her own convictions. When her decision was made at last, I am sure she did not hesitate five minutes. She entered into the task almost with enthusiasm; within a dozen hours she was gone, had bundled the child north, to the bay region, where the nights were cooler.

"The child, you see, either was none of her business, or it was very much her business. The word compromise had no meaning to her. The fact that she married its father was a natural incidental. She had a logical mind, and a great deal of courage."

The heralded breeze reached us and set up a rustling among the branches of the pines.

Norwick relaxed in his chair, greeting it with an air of relief.

"We have these periods of calm each summer," he said. "They seldom last more than a few hours."

THE PENALTY

By Harold Crawford Stearns

I SAID: I will not turn to love
Till I am wise and old,
For youth must play philanderer
With quips and cranks and gold.

The years were kind; love hovered near,
A dainty, tempting prize,
But when at last I looked at her
I could not find her eyes.

HABIT

By T. F. Mitchell

HE was a sharpshooter. His wife stood on the stage with the glass ball on her head. He remembered how dreadfully he was afraid of her. He thought of all the nagging years, the years she had made a burden to him. He thought how intolerable she had been to him. How easy it would be to aim a little low, he figured. An accident, everybody would say. Slowly he raised the rifle to his shoulder. There was a sharp report and a shout from the audience as the glass ball shattered.

FATE

By Le Baron Cooke

HE went out into the big spaces,
Espousing new causes,
Discovering freer forms,
And prophesying the establishment
Of unaccepted truths.
"A Poet of Protest!"
The world proclaimed,
And gave him its bay
For his achievements.

But one day he died
(Just after he had completed
A mighty poem,
A revolt against mediocrity).
And they carried him back
To a sordid little mill town,
His birthplace,
And buried him with Masonic honours
In the graveyard of his people.

THE only really peaceful marriage is the one in which both parties are afraid of each other.

MAMIE CARPENTER

By Thyra Samter Winslow

I

MILLERSVILLE, Missouri, was the usual small town. It boasted, according to the Millersville *Eagle* and the annual leaflet of the Chamber of Commerce, a population of twenty thousand souls. There were, perhaps, ten thousand actual human beings in Millersville, including the farmers within a radius of five miles, the few Italians and Slavs down near the railroad tracks, and the negroes.

Millersville's Main Street extended nearly the full length of the town, footed by the Sulpulpa River and the Union Depot, and headed by the Brick Church. On Main Street were the Grand Hotel—five stories high; the Bon Marché and the New York Store, whose buyers went to New York—or anyhow Chicago—twice each year; the Busy Bee, candy fresh every day, always two kinds of ice cream, with marble topped tables in the back half of it for sodas and ice creams; an assortment of drug stores and cigar stores; garages, still carrying the outward semblance of the stables from which they had sprung; "gents' furnishings," with clerks who copied, in their fashion, the styles in the men's clothing advertisements, always standing near the doors where they could most easily ogle the feminine passerby; groceries displaying the season's best potatoes and onions, with sawdust floors and clerks in white aprons and pencils behind their ears; and two furniture stores with windows brimming with golden oak rockers.

On either side of Main Street, the streets stretched out in a regular checkerboard, the first blocks of them devoted to the lesser business establishments that had overflowed Main Street, and the remaining blocks given over to residences. The majority of these streets, a few blocks out, were full of neat houses—old houses with mansard roofs and cupolas; new houses in atrocious, too-low bungalow effects, with awful, protruding roofs; simple white cottages, each with its green lawn and over half with a red swing in front and a small, one-car garage in back. Then came a turning into tumbledown negro quarters of the homes of the neighbourhood "white trash."

There was a difference in streets, too. Up near the Brick Church the streets were respectable for all their length, the houses were bigger, and the lawns were better cared for. Maple Street, the last to enter Main, was the best of all, turning into Maple Road, later on, when it became even more select until, when it reached Burton Addition—the old Burton farm—it burst forth into a spasm of country homes, a dozen of them, with pretentiously landscaped "grounds."

Each house showed an attempt at grandeur in architecture. Some aped Southern Colonial, with white clapboards or brick; others aimed at English styles, with stucco or half-timber. Each house, too, had a peculiar, inappropriate and ineffectual name: "The Elms," "The Lonesome Pine," "Pleasure," "Crestwood," "Hilltop." Miss Drewsy, of the Millersville *Eagle*, whose rich cousins, the Horns, lived in Maple Street, which gave her social standing, mentioned the names of these

houses in her society column whenever possible.

On the other side of town, toward Union Station and the river, the streets became gradually less pleasing and less important, until, when one reached Gillen Row, the neat houses had given way to gray ramshackle affairs, a bit tipsy as to roof or wall or chimney, with a porch awry, a baluster missing and an occasional broken window patched with papers or rags. These houses were surrounded by gray lawns tufted with weeds, and around them were unpainted picket fences with half of the pickets missing.

Mamie Carpenter lived in Gillen Row, in the least pleasing block of it. Her home was a one-story cottage which had, in its adolescence, showed the spruce yellow and white of a poached egg, but in its senility one could barely see the remains of this glory. The porch which ran across the front sagged. One of the posts was missing. The bottom of the three steps leading up to the porch was loose, the wood breaking into long brown slivers under one's foot. One went directly from the unevenly-floored porch, which held two once-green rockers and a bench of slatted wood, into the living room, papered in what had formerly been gold and green but was now a more fortunate, though dirty, tan.

The living room held a figured red rug, a table and half a dozen unmatched chairs, mostly rockers, of uncertain wood and construction. Back of this was the dining room, with a table and four chairs and a huge, golden oak, mirrored sideboard. Next came a narrow hallway, leading on one side to a dark green kitchen, and, on the other to the small and incomplete bath. Beyond were the two bedrooms, one occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Carpenter, who slept in a large bed of yellow wood, with high head and foot board, new when they were married twenty-two years before, and the other, with its iron and brass bed and rickety dresser of imitation mahogany, occupied by their daughter Mamie.

II

Mamie Carpenter was twenty-one. She could have passed for eighteen; she knew it and, when meeting new acquaintances, she often did. She was small and had blonde hair, not white and faded-looking, but real blonde, which needed only an occasional touching up with peroxide to be a lovely, gleaming mass of gold. Her hair was not especially thick nor long, but it waved naturally and Mamie had acquired the knack of doing it high on her head so that it looked pleasantly mussed and fresh.

Her nose was short and well chiselled. Her eyes were round and blue and she pencilled them just a little, which gave the necessary accent. Her mouth was perhaps a bit too full, but her complexion was creamy and her cheeks pleasantly pink and plump. She had learned that if you can't afford many clothes, it's better to stick to plain things —if your figure is good enough. Mamie's figure was trim and softly curved, with a roundness that hinted of fat at thirty.

Mamie clerked at the Busy Bee candy store. She had left school in her second year of High School when, after a series of small accidents at the yards, her father, a "railroad man," found himself more frequently out of work than usual.

She had become tired of school, anyhow, but had kept on going until then, partly out of habit and partly because she felt superior to her parents and her neighbours and wanted the further superiority of a higher education. Her mother could do nothing but housework, and that but poorly, and would not consider the indignity of doing menial labour for others, so Mamie, not knowing where to turn at first, and being untrained, went into the overall factory, one of Millersville's few industries. She found the work monotonous and disagreeable. A doctor's reception room and a cashier's cage next claimed her in turn. Both bored her.

Then she heard that the Busy Bee was enlarging the store and wanted pretty saleswomen. Mamie knew she was pretty. She applied for and got the job and had been there ever since. Mamie daily disproved the theories that, if you give a girl enough candy to eat she soon tires of it, that candy-shop girls do not care for sweets, and that sugar ruins the complexion. She nibbled at chocolates at intervals all day long, and, except that perhaps her cheeks were a bit pinker, her hair a trifle more blonde, she remained just the same.

To the mere buyer of candy, Mamie was one of the pretty, polite little girls in big white aprons who waited on you at the Busy Bee. To her acquaintances and the dwellers in Gillen Row she was old Joe Carpenter's girl, a reproach in itself—rather a wild piece. To Millersville, socially, she was, of course, nothing at all. She did not exist to Millersville's smartest circle except as a purveyor of sweets. She was below even the least important members of the church societies, who occasionally got into the end paragraphs in Miss Drewsy's society column.

Mamie knew how Millersville felt about her, and her liking for Millersville was shaped accordingly. She especially disliked the "society girls," the ones who lived in Maple Road, because they had good times and did the sort of things she would like to have done. They could flirt and not get talked about. The girls in the Busy Bee looked up to them, whispered about them when they came in.

The rest of Millersville Mamie didn't mind, but she despised those girls with a keen, sharp, unbelievable hate. She was better-looking than any of them. She knew that. Society? Good blood? Family? What did they mean, in Millersville?

Mamie scorned Millersville's social pretensions. She knew that in some cities, London and New York, maybe, there was society, real people with generations of good blood back of them, and money and breeding. People like that Mamie could look up to. But she knew Miliersville. In Millersville, what did society amount to? A joke; that's what it was. No one there really came to anything, did anything.

The Elwood Simpsons, the leaders of Millersville society—look at them! There was a little grave in Oakdale Cemetery that Mamie knew all about—and it was closely connected with the girlhood of Mrs. Elwood Simpson—and there were other babies who did not die, but who arrived at equally inopportune times. The Coakleys were one of Millersville's oldest and best families—and Frank Coakley's half-brother spent most of his time in jail, and his other half-brother, Bill, was half-witted, went around with his tongue hanging out and saying silly things. The Binghams—ugh—they had to get their servants out of town, and, sometimes at the last minute had to break engagements because someone in their third floor would cry and scream—their oldest daughter, some said it was.

Mamie knew other things about Millersville society. The rich Ruckers made their money getting land away from ignorant farmers. The Bilcamps made theirs selling fake oil stocks in Ohlahoma. There was some sort of a misrun bank in the Grantly family. It wouldn't do too closely to look into the histories of any of them. Yet they were "society" and had a Country Club—and lots of good times.

Mamie knew she was as good as any of them—better than most. Her family had moved to Millersville from Lexington when she was thirteen. Her father had got into some sort of a scrape over a woman—or a girl—she had never known much about it, but anyhow, it was enough to make them move. Of course the news of it had seeped to Millersville, made the Carpenters a bit more outcast than they would have been, though they wouldn't have been anything, in any case, without money or connections.

Coming to Millersville hadn't made any difference to Mamie. The new house was just as unpleasant as the old.

She had had just as good a time playing with the boys of the neighbourhood, catching on wagons for rides, in Millersville as in Lexington. She had liked Millersville all right. She had gone to school rather unevenly, staying at home for frequent imaginary ills. But a sense of herself had kept her in school beyond the age of most of her friends.

It was in High School that she had first felt the social barriers of Millersville—and she had sneered at them even as they hurt her. The teachers had all been partial to the two stupid Redding girls, pale-haired, fat and awkward, because Samuel Redding was president of the school board. Their essays had been praised and read aloud in the class. Mamie had known that hers were quite as good and that she was just as clever—and much prettier. But nobody had ever praised or noticed her.

On Friday nights there had been parties, which "the crowd" attended. During the week, eating her lunches in the school lunch-room, echoes of the glories of the parties had reached her—how Marion Smith had let Harold Frederickson put his arm around her, how much salad Louis Bingham had eaten. There had been clubs at school, intimate things with secrets and pins and bows of coloured ribbon; there had been cryptic jokes handed from one member of the selected set to another, to be referred to, giggled over. But Mamie had been out of it all.

There had been other sets, less desirable, the church societies, smaller, less exclusive organizations. Mamie had not been welcomed to these, either, though by a great effort the daughter of old Joe Carpenter might have attained the least of them. She had not wanted to belong. She had not wanted to go with the "society set" of her age, either. It had been more than that. She had wanted them to want *her*. But her father, a ne'er-do-well, had been run out of Lexington, her mother was a slovenly woman with wispy hair, and her home was a gray shamble in Gillen Row.

So Mamie, as she grew up, did not improve her social position. She remained old Joe Carpenter's girl, from Gillen Row.

III

But if society did not recognize Mamie, the masculine element of it did, in a hidden, stealthy way.

Even when she had gone to High School the most desirable boys had offered her—secretly—invitations, moonlight drives—the best people of Millersville did not allow their daughters to drive after sundown with masculine escorts—and other forbidden pleasures. When she was younger Mamie accepted these invitations, but when she grew older and came to the Busy Bee to work, she learned how unpleasant they could be. Gradually, the men had ceased bothering about her. After all, she was only old Carpenter's daughter and not a good sport—no pep to her.

In the Busy Bee, too, had come invitations from the commercial travellers who hung around the Grand Hotel. Mamie accepted them for a while. She wanted a good time. She flirted and laughed, went for walks and drives. But finally she stopped going with the travelling men—refused their invitations altogether. She didn't know why—just no fun any more, nothing to it.

Not that these refusals helped her reputation in Millersville. A girl as pretty as Mamie and coming from such a neighbourhood as Gillen Row and with Joe Carpenter as a father had no reputation to lose.

But when she quit "running around" it left her pretty much alone. She even refused the invitations of the girls who worked with her at the Busy Bee. Their homes were neater than hers. She couldn't return their invitations. Anyhow, she didn't care anything about them. Their beaux, decent clerks, annoyed her. Occasionally, lately, she had allowed Will Remmers, of the New York Store, to take her to some of Millersville's infrequent theatrical performances. She didn't care for Will Remmers, a stupid fellow who thought he was doing her a favour, but, at least, he

was decent—someone to go with. She didn't care for anyone especially. She had learned a lot about men, being pretty and meeting them since she was sixteen.

Mamie had tried to think of some way to get out of Millersville, but she never went far enough to plan anything definitely. The home in Gillen Row took all of her money; she could barely keep out enough to dress decently. She saw no future by the route of the drummers of the Grand Hotel. She had no profession or training. Really, she didn't dislike being in Millersville. If she could have been one of the society set she felt she would have liked it very well indeed. It was just her position that annoyed her—having nothing, no pretty things, being nothing—when girls like the Reddings had so much.

The Reddings especially annoyed Mamie.

There were two Redding girls: Sophie, the older, rather fat and white with colourless hair, and Esther, a bit more presentable, but a trifle more stupid, if anything. The Redding girls giggled, holding their heads on one side. They tossed their light curls. They snuggled up to their young men. They were always coming into the Busy Bee, the head of a little group, laughing and chatting, selecting tables with great care, ordering elaborate sundaes or sodas. They always had new little tricks, new clothes. If they recognized Mamie as one of their old schoolmates, they gave no sign. They had each had a year at the Craig School, a second-rate boarding school that New York maintained for rich Westerners, and liked to forget that they had ever attended any other institution.

When Marlin Embury came into the Busy Bee to make a purchase, Mamie might have paid no attention to him at all if Rosie Martin hadn't nudged her.

"That's William E. Embury's son," she said. "He's back in town. Do you know him? I read in the *Eagle* he's gone in with his father in the business. He goes with Sophie Redding. They say he is going to marry her, though they haven't announced the engagement."

Mamie looked at Embury and liked him. That nice-looking fellow—for Sophie Redding! Not nearly as handsome as the man who had played in the stock company in Millersville the month before, but not bad-looking—didn't compare with Wallace Reid or Francis X. Bushman, but then they were only on the screen—pictures as far as she was concerned, and married—she'd read that in a magazine—and Embury was right here.

She knew who Embury was, had seen him, years ago, before he went away to college, had sort of kept track of him through the papers. She had read, several months before, that he was back in Millersville, after two years as manager of some of his father's oil wells in Oklahoma.

And now he was going with Sophie Redding! Good-looking and rich—the only son of rich parents—and Sophie Redding would get him! He had a good face, was young, couldn't be more than twenty-four. That young kind is easy—falls for anything. Mamie knew that. He had gone to a boys' preparatory school, then to a college that was not co-educational, then two years in a little town. Why—he didn't know anything about girls. He'd be easy even for Sophie Redding to capture—Sophie, with her home, "Crestwood," out in Maple Road, her father gray-haired and pompous, and her mother, fat and smiling—always giving parties—good times.

No wonder Sophie could get him, even if she was fat and white and silly! Sophie had everything. What chance had she against Sophie?

Until then it hadn't occurred to Mamie that she was entitled to a chance—that there was even the possibility of her and Sophie having aims in the same direction. And yet—

She looked at Embury.

He had bought a huge box of candy. It was being wrapped up for him. He was a nice boy with sleek black hair, not especially tall, but then she herself was small and didn't like tall men. He had nice shoulders, a slim figure, a good

head. Just a boy. Fat Sophie Redding, with her pale eyes and giggles—why, she *knew* she was prettier, smarter than Sophie! And yet—Sophie—!

Why not do something about it? *Do* something? Get Embury? Why not? Wasn't his father about the richest man in Millersville? Wasn't he the most eligible man in town, now that Bliss Bingham had gone to Chicago and Harold Richardson was married?

There were other men, of course, but either they were old bachelors who knew too much about her, old and snobbish, or poor or too young. Embury had already made good in Oklahoma. Now his father had taken him into business, wouldn't disinherit him—if he married her. Wasn't it rumoured that Mrs. Embury—stately and dignified enough now—had before her marriage "worked out"? She wouldn't dare object too strenuously to Joe Carpenter's daughter as her daughter-in-law.

After all, Mamie had always wondered if she could do something clever if she had a chance. Here was her chance—she'd never have a better one, she knew that. After all, no one would help her—all she had was herself. Maybe, if she tried hard enough . . .

Embury took his package and went out of the store. He had not noticed Mamie Carpenter.

IV

Embury was glad to get home again. He thought Millersville a jolly place to live in after Sorgo, Oklahoma, with its constant smell and feel of oil. He enjoyed his old room again and the new car and being with the crowd.

He was not an especially brilliant fellow, nor a rapid thinker, nor much of a reader. He liked a good time, in a quiet way. He wore good clothes and liked to be with others who did. He thought girls were awfully jolly, but hard to get acquainted with. He found the girls in Millersville unusually pleasant. But, of course, that was as it should be; they were home-town girls.

Sophie Redding—she was jolly and cute and had a way of making him feel awfully at home. It was pleasant at the Reddings', sitting out on the big porch and drinking lemonade, with Sophie ready to laugh at his jokes and some of the others of the crowd likely to drop in at any time. Yes, Sophie was a pretty fine girl. His folks liked her, too, always awfully glad when he called on her, kept telling him what a fine girl she was and how much they liked the family. Now, if he showed her a good time all summer and autumn, did all he could for her, maybe Sophie would care for him.

Embury was driving down Main Street four or five days later when a pretty girl nodded to him, just a formal, pleasant little nod.

Embury couldn't place her, exactly, but he spoke, of course. He even took his eyes off the road ahead long enough to glance back at her. She was pretty, and he liked little girls who wore plain blue dresses in summer. Someone, probably, he'd met out at the Country Club and didn't remember. Still, she seemed prettier than most of the girls he had met there. Maybe someone he used to know. He tried to conjure up a childhood acquaintance who might have blossomed into this little blonde girl, but he couldn't. Anyhow, she was pretty.

Two weeks later, walking up Elm Street after leaving the office—he frequently walked home and always went that way when he did—the same little figure overtook him, passed ahead. His heart palpitated quite pleasantly. But this time the nod was even cooler, more formal. He returned it as cordially as he could. That night there was a dance at the club and Embury watched each new arrival, but there was no pretty little blonde with big eyes and radiant hair. Sophie found him preoccupied and told him so. He tried his best to be more courteous to her. After all, why worry about a strange girl? You couldn't tell who she might turn out to be.

He saw her again, a week later, when he was driving. Again he received a cool little nod. He'd ask some of the boys about her—she might be good fun

—evidently wasn't one of the crowd. Millersville was a slow place, not much to do, a little affair on the side—by another year he might be married and settled down—might as well have a good time while he could.

He didn't have to ask any of the boys, for the very next day, on Elm Street, the little figure in blue held out her hand as he overtook her.

"I don't believe you know me," she laughed prettily, shyly. "You've looked —so amazed, when I've spoken. Don't tell me your years out of town have made you forget old acquaintances altogether. I'm Mamie Carpenter."

"Why, of course, Miss Carpenter, I'm delighted," he stammered.

"Oh, I'm so ashamed," she said, then hurriedly, with embarrassed little pauses between the words: "Here, I've stopped you to tell you how—how glad Millersville is to have you back—and—I'm afraid you don't remember me, after all. I don't blame you—I was such a little girl when you left—and I'm not—important. But I remember when I went to the Grant School, and you were in High, I used to stop every day and watch you practise football. You wore a red sweater, I remember. You—you were one of my youthful heroes, you see."

He thought, then, that he did remember her, and said so. Little girls change —he knew that. It was pleasant for him to think that, after all these years, she remembered him. He had worn a red sweater—still, wasn't the school colour red; hadn't all the other boys worn them, too? Well, anyhow, he had played football. No one else had said anything about those days. How pretty she was—a wonderful complexion! Why, in comparison, it made Sophie's seem almost pasty. Of course, Sophie was a Redding—that was different—a serious thing, a bully girl, too. Mamie—he liked the name—it was like her, simple, plain, pretty. She might be great fun. To think of her remembering him all these years! What a plain little dress she wore! Poor people, evidently. Oh, well—

Two weeks later, in Elm Street—it was a quiet street, tree-lined—he met Mamie again. She was walking ahead of him as he turned up from Main. He caught up with her.

"You live near here?" he asked.

She told him, very seriously, that she lived in Gillen Row and that her parents were awfully poor.

"I—I work, you know—in the Busy Bee, the candy store. It makes things a little easier for mother—and my father. I stopped school before my junior year —to—to help them. Of course, I've kept up with reading—but—I didn't mind stopping—my father had an accident and they needed me. It isn't bad —it's rather pleasant at the Busy Bee—interesting to watch people."

"I'm sure you're the sweetest thing there," said Embury, and was surprised at his own boldness and a bit ashamed when he saw how Mamie blushed and dropped her eyes. What a dear little thing she was, leaving school to help her folks and not even complaining about it —and not ashamed, either, didn't try to conceal it. It never occurred to him that he probably would have seen her in the Busy Bee any day and so discovered her position for himself.

"You always walk home on Elm Street?" he asked to cover her confusion—she was still blushing.

"Yes, it's so quiet and peaceful, the trees and all."

"That's funny. That's why *I* go this way, when I don't take the car to the office."

"You do?" Mamie showed great surprise. "Isn't it funny, our tastes in streets?"

Perhaps even more remarkable, if she had mentioned it, would have been the fact that Mamie had never honoured Elm Street with her presence until—investigating by little scurries after leaving the shop in the evening—she had found that Embury usually chose it when walking home.

V

Two days later, Embury walked up Elm Street with Mamie again. He had

looked for her the day before, and had been disappointed when he did not see her. Hadn't she said she walked there every day?

"I didn't see you yesterday," he said with a smile, as he joined her.

Mamie explained—not the real fact, that she had taken her old route home so as not to appear too eager for his acquaintance—but that she had gone a shorter way so that she could hurry home to cook dinner—her mother wasn't well.

"Poor little girl," thought Embury, "working all day and then cooking dinner at night, too."

"I missed you," he said.

Mamie blushed again. She was rather good at it. Many people are.

"Are you going to stay here in Millersville?" Mamie asked.

No use getting excited, working hard over him, if he wasn't. Embury was the first real opportunity she had had—if she could only get him before the others poisoned his mind against her or before the Reddings made his escape impossible—if he were going to leave Millersville, there wouldn't be any use bothering about him.

Embury told her that he was to stay in town, and she showed pleasure and blushed again. She asked him about his work and his plans.

To his surprise, Embury found himself telling her about himself. Here was a girl, intelligent, interesting. The other girls didn't know anything about business. But, of course, thrown on her own resources as she had been, she'd learned to take a real interest in the business world.

They walked together until a block before the street down which Embury usually turned.

"I go this way," said Mamie.

She could have continued on Elm Street, but she thought it best to be the first to break their walk together.

"Wait a minute; don't go away so quickly," said Embury.

He felt as if he were on a delightful adventure.

Quietly, Mamie waited.

"When am I going to see you again?" he asked.

She started to say something, blushed, then: "Why, I don't know—I mean, any evening, walking home this way. I'm at the Busy Bee all day, you know."

"At night. Can't I call? Can't you go for a drive?"

Mamie knew how her home would look to Embury, the porch with its sagging floor, the living-room with its clutter of ugly chairs, her parents quarrelling, more than likely. She couldn't receive him at home. It didn't seem fair—she had to fight against so many odds—and Sophie Redding had the whole Redding home, with its great porches, its big living-rooms for entertaining. How she hated Sophie Redding with her giggles, her light stringy hair. Still, if she were smart enough—there might be ways. . . .

"I'm afraid I can't let you call at all," she said modestly. "You see, I'm not one of the society girls. It—it wouldn't look right, I'm afraid. You know how—how careful a girl has got to be."

What a dear little thing she was! Modest and shy and good. Each second Embury felt himself more and more a man of the world. This little thing, so fragile and dainty—and awfully pretty. Of course she was right. People would talk—and yet . . .

He didn't know that Millersville would not talk about Mamie, no matter how many men called on her, that they had talked when she was a little girl and dismissed her, carelessly, as "Joe Carpenter's daughter, a bad egg." Mamie knew. It didn't make her feel any happier. Still, this was no time to worry about it.

"Couldn't we go for a ride some evening?" he asked. "No one would see us, honestly they wouldn't."

"I couldn't. Really. You know how it is. I'd love to—but—it wouldn't be right. I can't go."

She appeared to want to yield to him. She knew how society in Millersville regarded girls who went automobiling with young men, alone. Embury would find out, if he didn't know already, and

his opinions would be moulded by the others.

"You're the funniest girl I ever saw," he smiled at her.

She was just small enough so that he looked down into her face when he stood close to her. Embury liked little girls. He was glad Mamie was small.

"Other girls would go with me, honestly they would."

"You'd better take them, then," she pouted, prettily.

"I don't mean that. I don't want to sound conceited. Only I would like to take you, honestly I would. I know a little road house, 'Under Two Flags,' where they make awfully good things to eat, French cooking. We could ride out there some night, if you'll go."

Mamie knew the road house. She used to think it great fun. She had slapped the faces of six commercial travellers driving home from it and finally had given it up as a dangerous place. It was, nevertheless, a fairly decent resort, with only a slightly sporty reputation, but, after all, the ride there and the supper weren't worth the trouble of keeping her escort in his place all the way back. Why did men expect such big rewards for a ride and a bit to eat?

Mamie smiled wistfully.

"I'm afraid not," she said. "I wish you wouldn't—tempt me so. You see, I never go driving—I—I don't have many good times."

Embury's conscience hurt him. She was such a dear. Of course she shouldn't go. He felt more wicked than ever.

"But look here," he said, "can't I see you at all?"

Mamie was thoughtful.

"I don't know," she said; then, "Next Friday I have a holiday—I work every second Sunday, the Busy Bee is open on Sundays too."

Embury was supposed to be at the office every day, but he knew he was not indispensable.

"Fine," he told her, "that's awfully good. Can we go in my car and make a picnic of it?"

Mamie thought that would be a lot of fun. They made plans for the meeting. That was Wednesday. On Thursday Mamie avoided Elm Street.

VI

FRIDAY she was a few minutes late. She had appointed the corner of Elm and East streets as the meeting-place. From a distance she saw Embury's car waiting at the curb near the corner. He sprang out when he saw her.

"This is jolly," he said.

She looked charming and she knew it. She had on a thin little dress of white, flecked with little rosebuds. It was plain and not new, but very fresh. A floppy leghorn hat was tied under her chin with a pale pink and yellow ribbon. She had trimmed the hat herself, after a picture she had seen in a copy of *Vogue* that someone had left in the Busy Bee. She knew it suited her. The night before she had had a quarrel with her father because she had not "turned in" enough money. She had purchased a tiny bottle of her favourite perfume, rather an expensive brand.

It was a perfect day, not too warm nor too sunny. Mamie did not snuggle close, as she felt Sophie would have done. She did not talk too much. But she took off her hat and let the wind blow her hair back—she had washed it the night before and it blew in soft waves. She sat near enough for Embury to smell the perfume of it.

They drove to a small nearby town, where Embury attended to some business his father had asked him to look after the week before. At noon he suggested eating in the town's one hotel. Mamie shuddered prettily, then had an idea.

"Can't we have a picnic—a real out-of-doors picnic?" she begged. "I'm shut away from the sunshine so much of the time."

Embury thought the idea delightful. With much laughter, they bought things at the little stores, bread and pickles and olives, tinned meats and cakes and a piece of ice in a bucket and lemons and

sugar for lemonade. They rode, then, until a bit of woods attracted them. They soon had the improvised luncheon spread out under a tree.

Embury was surprised at his enjoyment. He watched Mamie's little white hands arranging the things to eat. He tramped to a nearby farm for water and returned with an extra pail containing fresh, cool milk. It all seemed decidedly pure and rural to him. The food tasted remarkably good and, when they had finished, he leaned against a tree and smoked, smiled as he looked at Mamie, still cool in the sprigged lawn.

"Having a good time?" he asked.

"Wonderful," she told him, "this is the best time I've ever had, I think. It's different. You're not like the other men I've known. I can talk to you—tell you things. This seems sort of—of a magic day."

Embury thought so, too. He told her so. He told her other things, about his business, his thoughts, what he was going to do. Finally, he was telling her about his two years in Oklahoma.

"That was prison," he said. "It was smoky and oily—you could feel the oil, taste it in your food. It hung over you, all day, like a cloud. Still, it was worth going through—for this."

"You are—nice," said Mamie, very softly.

"Let's keep this day for a secret," she said. "Just the two of us will know about it. Let's keep all of our times together as secrets—if we ever see each other again."

Embury agreed that secrets were very nice things to have.

They were silent for a while.

Finally he got up, walked over to her. Mamie got to her feet, too. He came close and put his hand on her shoulder, started to put his arms around her.

"You're a dear little girl," he said.

Mamie lifted big eyes to him.

"Please don't," she moved away, ever so slightly. "Please let me keep to-day perfect—as a memory. We—may never see each other again. I want to remember to-day as it is now. I—"

She broke off, embarrassed. Embury felt suddenly bad, ashamed. How innocent she was! If he were going to be a man of the world, he'd have to think of another way. He couldn't break the silken wings of her innocence by spoiling her day—her perfect day—she worked so hard and was so good. It had been a pleasant day for him, too. Later—he could see her other times, of course.

"I wanted to make the day more beautiful," he said, but he did not try to touch her again.

They rode home almost in silence. When she said good-bye, in Elm Street, she let her hand lie in his a moment. How small it seemed. Why, actually, it trembled.

"When am I going to see you again?" he asked.

"I don't know," said Mamie. Then, "I walk up Elm Street every day, you know. I—I had a wonderful time." She smiled a bit sadly, and was gone.

That night there was a party at the Country Club and Embury took Sophie Redding.

For the first time since he knew her he noticed how fat her hands were, a trifle red, too—and how she took possession of him, as if they were already married—and he'd never proposed to her. She giggled too much. It made him nervous. He knew a dainty, pretty girl, a simple little girl, who didn't go to Country Club dances nor roll her eyes nor put her hands on fellows' shoulders. Of course, Sophie was the sort of girl that a fellow married—position and all that—his mother kept hinting things—what a fine family the Reddings were, what a nice wife Sophie would make. . . .

Still, he was young yet. Too young to settle down. He'd have his fling first, anyhow.

VII

For five days Embury walked home on Elm Street. He did not see Mamie. On the sixth day he went into the Busy Bee. There she was, her blonde hair more golden and beautiful than ever. She smiled a quick greeting at him. He

had been afraid to go in, ashamed almost. What if it would embarrass her—what if she didn't want to see him? Of course, he wasn't going in to see her—he really had a purchase to make, still . . .

Should he let her wait on him or get someone else? He saw her speak to another girl. Then she walked back of the counter to meet him.

"Hello," she said, very low but gayly.

"How have you been?" he asked. "I haven't seen you for days."

She laughed.

"It's good of you to bother. My mother has been ill again. I wasn't down at all yesterday. You wanted to buy some candy? May—I wait on you?"

She was modest, didn't think he had come in especially to see her. He bought a box of chocolates and took it away under his arm.

That evening he met her in Elm Street.

"The candy is for you," he told her.

She accepted it, with as seeming a gratitude as if she didn't get all the candy she could eat all day long.

"You bought my favourite chocolates," she told him. "I wondered—"

She broke off, blushing.

"Who were they for?"

"I—I mean I didn't think they were for me. You know how girls in—in stores gossip. I heard—someone said that you were attentive to—I mean that you liked—someone here in Millersville."

"I do," said Embury boldly, and caught her eye.

She blushed again, prettily.

"It was Miss Redding they meant," she said.

So—people were saying things about him and Sophie Redding. Embury didn't like it. He was too young to get married. He felt that. That's the trouble with a small town, no sooner you start going with a girl than the town has you engaged and married. Mrs. Redding, too—she was being too nice to him—too affectionate.

"Miss Redding is an awfully nice girl," he told her. "We've been to a few parties together, but that's all. You know how Millersville is."

"I know. I went to High School with the Redding girls. They're just a few years older than I am. I'm sorry I said anything. I guess I just listened to gossip. You know how you hear things. Just to show how wrong people can be—why, what I heard was that—that Miss Redding herself had said that you were—were going together. Millersville is awfully gossipy, isn't it?"

So, Sophie had been talking about his going with her. But it was just the thing she would do. A few weeks ago he had felt that if he could win Sophie it would be a very desirable thing. But lately he'd been annoyed at her. She'd shown him too many attentions—or too many pointed slights to pique him. He felt himself falling into a sort of net that she was spreading. Why, even this little girl, so far away from the set in which Sophie moved, had heard things. He'd be careful—he wasn't engaged to Sophie yet.

He admitted that Millersville was gossipy but that there was "nothing to" the gossip about him. He and Mamie had a pleasant walk up Elm Street.

After that, for several weeks, he met Mamie every day. He tried to make other engagements, but she wouldn't go for picnics or drives, even on her days off. She told Embury that she had to help her mother, who wasn't strong and needed her. But she consented to the evening walks home.

How sweet and simple she was, Embury felt. Other girls would have playfully avoided him, teased him, tried to make him more eager by their indifference. Mamie was always admittedly glad to be with him. Excepting when she had to hurry home a shorter way, she was always walking up the street when he overtook her. He began to look forward to these little walks, down the quiet, tree-shaded way. Mamie on the warmest days seemed to remain cool and fresh-looking, her blonde hair soft and fluffy. In the shade she would take off her hat and turn her face up to catch

any stray breeze. She'd have jolly little stories to tell him and be interested in everything that he was doing.

Walking next to her he could watch the soft curve of her body, smell the pleasant fragrance of the perfume she used. Later, when he was alone, he contrasted her; gentle of voice, sweet, simple, sensible; with Sophie and Esther, the other girls of the crowd, their giggles and affectations, their attempts at intimacies, pressing close to him while they danced, overheated after dancing, their hair moist, their voices loud, their behaviour foolish. This little girl had more refinement than any of them—knew how to keep her self-respect, too. These walks were the pleasantest part of his day.

Then, one evening Mamie was standing at the corner of Elm and East Street waiting for him, her eyes wide and frightened. From a distance he had seen her dainty figure, the plain straw hat, the simple frock.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"It's really nothing," she said, but her eyes held tears.

"Tell me. Is it serious?"

"It's nothing. That is, you'll think it's nothing at all. I—I can't tell you. It—spoils things—our little walks, our pleasant friendship."

"What do you mean?"

"It's awful—Millersville. I hate it—. People misunderstand. I'm poor, you know—and work. It's so easy for people to talk about a girl in my position. And someone told my—my father that I meet you every evening. He—he grew awfully angry. You don't know my father—he has a terrible temper. I—I can't ever meet you any more. That's all."

She wiped her eyes carefully, with her small handkerchief. "Of course—it's nothing to you, but it's meant so much—I'm silly, I guess, but it's been the pleasant part of—of my life." She sniffled, very gently.

"My dear, my dear," Embury was moved. He wanted to take her into his arms. Such a little girl—talked about—because she went walking with him! He danced with other girls, put his arms around them on porches, kissed them, even. And this little girl—walked with him—and even that was denied her.

Suddenly, it came to him how much the walks meant—how much Mamie meant to him. Each day he told her everything he had done, talked over his small business difficulties with her. She was always asking such sensible, thoughtful questions about things. None of the other girls cared—all they cared was that he was old man Embury's son—good as an escort—or to bring candy or flowers. He had never taken Mamie any place, nor spent money on her. She seemed apart from things—their little walks up the quiet street seemed to belong to another world.

"It's nonsense," he said. "I won't stand it. It's ridiculous. Of course we can keep on seeing each other."

"I'm afraid not," her voice was unsteady.

"But we must. Don't you care?"

"I—I—told you—I don't dare think how lonely I'll be. Thinking about our talks has helped me all day long."

Mamie wouldn't let Embury call on her, either. Not just yet—maybe later, when her father was no longer angry. She didn't dare disobey him, he was rather cross, almost cruel to her.

They walked the rest of the way in silence. At her street Mamie held out her hand and Embury took it and held it. It seemed a very solemn occasion.

Mamie's expression was not so sad as she turned down the side street. It was decidedly pleasant and smiling. It might have puzzled Embury if he had seen it, but not more than the conversation would have puzzled Joe Carpenter. For, not since Mamie was ten had her father tried to give her advice concerning her associates. No one ever came to him with tales of Mamie and he had never even heard that the rich Mr. Embury had a son.

VIII

For weeks, then, Embury didn't see Mamie. At first he dismissed the whole

thing with a careless, "Well, that little affair is over," a slight disappointment that Mamie hadn't been a better sport. It was just as well—. Someone had told his parents, too, and they had questioned him, rather teasingly, about the companion of his evening walks. But they had been serious, at that. They didn't want him to get "mixed up" with anyone.

Then he began to miss Mamie, miss the chance to talk about himself, miss her soft femininity. To put her out of his mind he devoted himself more thoroughly to Sophie.

After all, she was the girl for him, one of the Redding girls, one of his own class. But when he talked to her he couldn't help comparing her to Mamie, whom he felt he knew very well. Mamie was fresh and wholesome and innocent. She never went to parties or dances, things like that. Sophie was full of little tricks, liked to say things with double meanings—and giggle. If the girls had been changed around—Sophie in Mamie's place—he couldn't quite understand it.

Sophie became too affectionate when he was with her, begged to light his cigarettes, always putting her hands on his shoulders, pinching his arm when anything exciting happened—and then pretending she hadn't meant to do it. She was an awfully nice girl, of course. But she so definitely pursued him. He got tired of hearing her praises sung at home, too. Her tricks of breaking engagements, pretending indifference—they were worse than her affectionate moods. Her hair was colourless, her eyes too light. Compared with Mamie . . .

As the days passed he missed Mamie more and more. He hated himself for his stupidity—he found himself passing the Busy Bee on all possible occasions, looking into the windows, over the display of assorted candy, into the store. Sometimes, above the counters, he'd see her, in her crisp white apron, her blonde, radiant hair framing her lovely little face. She was always busy, always cheerful. Other girls wasted their lives having good times. Mamie worked on, day after day—gentle, good. Sometimes Embury thought her face looked serious, a bit sad. Did she miss him?

Finally he couldn't stand it any longer. He cursed himself for his silliness—he went into the Busy Bee, bought some candy. He had promised himself he wouldn't annoy her—she was right—it was better that they shouldn't see each other any more. Yet he was shedding the dignity of an Embury, acting the mere oaf, hanging around a candy store hoping for a smile from a salesgirl. He should have known better, scorned such behaviour. But there he was.

Mamie was busy. He waited—someone called to her and she went into the back of the shop. He felt like a fool—didn't dare ask for her. He bought his candy and went out. Next day he passed the shop three times. The day after he went inside again. He watched Mamie's slim fingers flying among the candy trays, putting chocolates into a box for a customer. How he loved her hands. They were too fine for such work. Why—he did love her—of course—that was it—he loved her—no use denying it.

He looked at her—her lovely profile, her fair complexion. She turned—smiled at him, rather a sad little smile—and went on packing chocolates, an adorable colour surging over her face. She had to pack chocolates—his girl! He loved her—and couldn't even walk down the street with her. He made a purchase and went out, hating himself the rest of the day.

He took the candy out to the Reddings that evening. Ten or twelve of the crowd were there. They turned on the Victrola and danced, then had lemonade. Everyone was in high spirits. Someone suggested a short drive to cool off after the dancing, so they all piled into the cars that stood waiting for them along Maple Road. Embury drove his car and Sophie sat next to him.

"Propose to her," something told him. "Go on, get definitely attached, have it

over with. Then you'll be settled, nothing to worry about. No use thinking about Mamie—you can't marry her."

But he couldn't propose, then nor later, when he was alone with her. Sophie chattered. The soft, pleasant night seemed marred. He thought of Mamie, their one ride together. He was sick of Sophie, of her tricks, her silliness, his parents' praise of her. He wanted Mamie.

He thought about Mamie before he fell asleep that night. He did love her. He knew that. But he couldn't marry her. Of course not. If he did, though, his father would be horribly disappointed. But he'd get over it—and his mother, too. It wasn't that. Mamie was far prettier and sweeter than any girl in the crowd. But she didn't belong—it was just that she lived in Gillen Row. The crowd would laugh at him.

What if they did laugh? Oh, well it was something. He didn't want to hurt his future. Mamie was in another set—another world—that was all. He couldn't marry her. Still—he could see her. There were other things beside marriage. He had to have his fling. He hadn't had any affairs. He was still young. Here was an affair, that was all. After that—you can settle such things with money—there was time enough for marriage, then—with Sophie, of course.

He woke up feeling quite the conquering hero, as if he had already taken definite steps in his approach on Mamie. She was a dear, a little innocent. He was a college man, a man of the world. Of course she was no match for him. Still—he'd be a fool not to follow the thing up—she was too pretty to leave—if not him, someone else then. Why not him?

At noon, when he left the office in his car, he drove up Gillen Row. What a street! There had been no rain for days—everything was covered with gray dust. There was a horrible sense of rust and decay and dirtiness. He didn't know which house was Mamie's, but they all looked alike in the sunshine, a squalid, ramshackle row—how different from his own home—from the Redding home, with their terraced lawns, their pleasant green bushes and flowers. This was a different life from the life he led, from the pleasant, comfortable ways of his people. And yet—Mamie—

IX

At half-past five he went into the Busy Bee. Mamie was not busy. She was standing near a glass counter, listlessly leaning one elbow against it. She looked pale, he thought, and yet dainty—dainty and sweet, and she'd come out of Gillen Row. It had been a hot summer. He was glad September was here.

She smiled as she saw him. How little she was! Hadn't she missed him at all? She had cared a little for him—he felt that. He could make her care again, if she'd give him a chance.

"I must see you," he told her.

She looked around, rather frightened. He had forgotten that she had to be careful about her position—that she actually was forced to sell candy in the Busy Bee.

"Don't you want to see me?" he added.

"Of course."

"You won't meet me in Elm Street?"

"I don't dare. I told you. You don't understand—I—I can't meet you."

"May I come to see you?"

"I—I told you—"

"But I *must* see you. Let me call."

"I don't—well, all right then, if you want to come. I shouldn't let you. My father—still, if you want to. I live way down in Gillen Row. We are—are very poor, you know. If you want—"

"Of course I do. Why didn't you let me come, before? May I come right away, to-night?"

She nodded.

"Where do you live?"

"The third house after Hill Street, Number 530. It's a little cottage."

"Go driving with me?"

"I—I told you I couldn't—at night—and I never have time, other times."

"To-night then, about eight. How's that?"

Mamie nodded again, smiled. Embury bought a box of candy to cover his embarrassment.

Going into a candy shop to make an engagement with a shopgirl—trembling when she spoke to him, grinning and ogling over the counter! He had never thought himself capable of that.

As he ate his dinner the engagement became something a bit different, a bit devilish. He'd take her out in his car. Of course. It would be a moonlight night. A simple girl like that—

X

A FEW minutes before eight he drove up to the cottage where Mamie lived. It was even more terrible than he had imagined it, a crooked little cottage with a funny, sagging porch, the paint peeled off, the lumber turned gray. There had been no attempt to beautify the small gray yard.

As he was stepping out of the car Mamie came out on the porch, walked hurriedly toward him. She had on pink, a thin, delicate pink, made very plain. Her complexion looked quite pale, her hair softer and brighter than ever.

She came up to him, put her hand on his arm, drew it back again. The gesture that had been affectation with Sophie became genuine embarrassment here.

"You—can't—call," she said nervously. "I told father at dinner. He's just stepped out. He'd get furious—if he found you here. He—he keeps harping on what that man told him—about my being seen with you—he says—I'm not in your class—that you don't mean—aren't—that I shouldn't go with you."

He saw that she was trembling. How soft she was and little! He wouldn't be cheated out of a ride with her—this evening—hadn't seen her for a long, long time. How he'd missed her!

"Jump in the car," he said. "Hurry up, before your father gets back. He'll never know."

"I can't. You don't know how angry he'd be. Girls don't ride at night, in Millersville. It will make things worse."

She drew back.

"You don't want to go?"

"Oh, I do, I do! You don't know how much."

"Then jump in."

"It wouldn't be right. You wouldn't respect me. Other girls—"

"My dear child, you don't know the world. Other girls go driving at night—and do worse things than that. Only night before last I took a girl out driving—Sophie Redding—Miss Redding and I—"

"I know, but she's—you know—I told you what I heard."

"There's no truth in that. I told you so. Now come on, be a nice girl, jump in. It's too perfect an evening to waste. We'll drive down Rock Road. No one will see us."

"I don't know—I—"

"Please come. You'll please me, won't you?"

He felt bold, masterful, put his hand on her arm. He saw he had done the wrong thing, been too hasty. She drew away, frightened.

"I—maybe—I'd better not see you any more, ever. That's what I'd planned—"

"Please come on, won't you, dear? Don't talk like that. Come on."

He let his voice grow tender—he was surprised to find how much he meant the tenderness. What if she wouldn't go?

She hesitated a moment, then.

"All right," she nodded, and jumped into the car.

She had ordered her parents to keep away from the front of the house, but she knew them. She was eager to get away before they peered out of the window or slouched out on the porch.

They left Gillen Row and were soon out in the country.

Mamie sighed, a pleasant sigh of happiness.

"I suppose I oughtn't be here," she said. "It's wrong, I know, but it seems right when I'm with you. I've been so lonely lately. It seems wonderful."

"You've missed me a little, then?"

"Missed you—of course."

The moon came out. They drove along the Sulpulpa River, and the moon rippled a path on the water. Embury stopped the car.

"This is great, isn't it?" he asked.

"Wonderful. I almost lose my breath at it. I'm that way about scenery—I can't say much. And to be here, now—"

He looked at her. She seemed almost ethereal in the moonlight, the pale pink of her dress, the soft gleam of her hair.

He put his arm around her, very gently, drew her close to him, held up her chin, looked at her. She was lovely, her fragrant, soft complexion, her big eyes. He kissed her.

She gave a little gasp. But there was no pulling away, none of the "how-dare-yous" which he had feared. As simply as a child she put her arms around his neck, kissed him, gave little whispers of contentment.

"You dear, you dear!" Embury whispered over and over again.

Then she drew away from him, turned her back, broke into a paroxysm of sobbing.

"What's the matter?" Embury asked, genuinely perplexed.

He hadn't quite understood her kissing him, though the kisses had been very pleasant. He understood her now least of all.

"I—I shouldn't have come with you," she sobbed. "Don't you see—I—I let you kiss me—I kissed you—I wanted to kiss you—I'm as much to blame as you—more. It's wrong. I shouldn't have come with you—now, you can't respect me any more. After this you'll think—"

"Now, now," he soothed, "don't carry on this way. Honest, it's all right. It really is. Of course I respect you, honey. You're the dearest little girl I know. Why—I—love you!"

He stumbled over the word—he had never told a girl that he loved her, before. He was quite sincere, now. Marriage—of course that was different. He knew that. But this little girl—she was a dear—lovely, as she lay in his arms, soft and yielding, her lips against his. Still, now he wanted her to stop crying—he had made her cry—

"Why, dear, kisses aren't anything, really. Lots of girls—. You don't know the ways of the world, that's all. Now cheer up—I didn't mean to frighten you."

"It—it was all my fault. I shouldn't have come. Of course, when I came, you thought—and I—I *wanted* to kiss you. That's the worst of it. Only—I did want to come—I never have anything. I'm—only nothing at all—and live in Gillen Row and you're Marlin Embury—and now—I've kissed you."

He drove her home. All the way home she sobbed softly. There was a light in the little cottage.

"Don't drive me to the house," she said. "Father's home—it's late—if he saw you—I don't know what he'd do. I'll be all right—if I go in alone. My mother will be waiting, too. She'll keep him from being too angry—if I explain to her. I—I think she'll understand."

He let her out at the corner, pressing her hand as he told her good-bye.

"Now don't you worry," he said. "I'll see you to-morrow, dear. A kiss is nothing to worry over, really it isn't."

She watched his car as he drove away, sent a tiny little wave of farewell to him as he looked back.

Her mother had gone to bed. Her father was playing cards with three cronies in the dining-room.

"That's right, come trailing in at all hours—running around with someone else—got someone new?" he growled, as she passed them.

"That's my business," she answered curtly.

Her father might have detected a new tone in her voice if he hadn't been too busy seeing that he got the best of his friends before they took advantage of him.

XI

EMBURY worried about the kisses pretty much that night after he got home.

After all, Mamie was such a little thing and awfully young, not more than

eighteen, probably, and not worldly, sophisticated, like the girls he went with. He oughtn't to have—well, taken advantage of her. She had said she would never see him again—and then, after he had said he'd see her to-morrow, he had seen her wave farewell. If he didn't see her—perhaps that would be best, after all. Still—her kisses were sweet—she was a dear—he remembered the touch of her soft lips.

In the morning Embury still thought only of Mamie's arms around his neck, her kisses. Of course he'd see her again. Why, he loved her. She was smarter, prettier, than Sophie. Sophie wouldn't have cried had he kissed her—she would have thought he had proposed and put their engagement in the papers. She probably thought they were even now. Wouldn't it be a joke on Sophie if he didn't marry her, after all? His parents—why should they rule his life?

Of course, marrying Mamie was out of the question—still, with pretty clothes, she'd beat any girl in Millersville on looks and brains. Why, she had them beat already. Hadn't she gone to High School until she had to stop to help out at home? Working every day, selling candy, luxuries—to others. Dear little thing—and now she was probably worrying because he had kissed her. Of course he'd see her—keep on seeking her. . . .

At ten o'clock he peered into the windows of the Busy Bee. Mamie was not there. At eleven he looked in again. He went to the office and attempted to work. He looked into the shop windows both going to and coming from luncheon. He couldn't keep his mind on what he was trying to do in the afternoon. Before three, he left for the day and went to the Busy Bee, looked in, went inside. It was almost a relief not to see Mamie—a relief, and yet it worried him.

A brown-haired girl he had never seen asked for his order. Embarrassed, he told her he wanted to speak to Miss Carpenter. What a fool he was. What else could he do?

Miss Carpenter hadn't been down all day—no, she didn't know what was the matter. Something she could do for him? Mechanically he ordered a box of candy.

He was glad he hadn't found Mamie there. After last night he didn't like to think of her clerking—waiting on people. He'd take her away—some place. Where? That was it—take her away. Still, he had to stay in Millersville—a town like Millersville! And she—why she cried when he kissed her—she was such a fragile, dainty little thing—like a lily—that was it—a lily, who had grown up in the muck of Gillen Row. Even too dainty for him. She wasn't at the store. What was the matter? What if—

He drove to Gillen Row as rapidly as he could, stopped his car in front of the forlorn cottage. What if her father was at home? Well, he could manage him—must manage him.

He ran up the front walk, up the broken steps, knocked at the door—the bell seemed out of order. He waited. No answer. Was there no one there?

He knocked again; tried to ring. No answer. He couldn't believe that the house was empty. He would wait. He stood on the porch, hesitating, wondering what to do. Then the door opened. It was Mamie.

She had on a blue suit, a plain little suit, with a white collar and a little black hat, turned up all around. He had never seen her except in summer things. How well she looked, with her bright hair showing below the hatbrim.

"You shouldn't have come here," she said. "You mustn't come. Go away—I never—was going to see you again."

"What's the matter? You aren't ill? You weren't at the Busy Bee?"

"I'm not going back again, ever. I—I can't stand it."

"What are you going to do, Mamie?"

She looked so little and tragic.

"Last night father was waiting for me when I got home. You don't know my father. He's cruel, brutal, sometimes. He seemed to know, before I told him—that I'd been driving with

you. So—I'm going away—I can't stand—this—any more."

"Going—where?"

He came inside, closed the door. What a mean little house it was.

"I don't know. Away from this—any place. I've enough money to get to—to Giffordsville. I can find something to do there. I've got to have peace and contentment—something. And you must hate me—after I kissed you last night. You can't care for me—respect me—and your respect was all I had."

"My dear, dear little girl. Why, I—I—"

His arms were around her again. But this time she did not meet his lips with hers. She dropped her head, struggled a little, then sighed.

"You see," she said, "I can't struggle against you. I must go away. I can't stand it—any longer. This house, everything—and now—"

"Mamie."

"Yes?"

"Look at me."

"I can't."

He forced her face upward.

"Do you love me?"

"Don't ask me to say it. You—know. Please don't be cruel to me. Let me go while I can."

"Cruel to you? Mamie, I love you. You know that. You mustn't go away from Millersville."

"I *must* go. After the quarrel with father, I can't stay here. That's settled."

"You *mustn't* go."

He repeated it over and over. He couldn't let her go. Without her, Millersville would be worse than oil-soaked Oklahoma. He dared not imagine it, even.

"I'm going now—I'm all ready for travelling. How can anything stop me?" She pointed to a little packed bag.

In his arms she was fragrant, sweet. How could she get along—what could she do, alone in the world? Why—she was his girl—he could take care of her. She understood him—his family—he wouldn't let his parents ruin his life.

Marry her? Of course. Wasn't she better, nobler than the rest of the girls—a cruel father who misunderstood her—alone in the world, really—little and sweet and dear. Going away? Why, if he married her he could keep her here. Of course.

"I'm glad you're ready," he said, "because you're going with me."

"What—what do you mean?"

She drew away.

"What could I mean? We—we love each other. We can drive right down to the court-house this minute. You—you won't mind—marrying me, will you?"

She snuggled closer to him and hid her head. From the sounds she made, he couldn't tell whether she was sobbing or giggling. But it didn't matter. Surely a girl could have her own method of accepting a proposal of marriage.

XII

THE marriage has really turned out very well. Even Millersville admits it. After all, Mamie Embury proved herself an exceptional woman, and was quite able in every way to take her rightful place in society as Marlin Embury's wife. If her parents seemed below the Millersville social level, no one dared dwell upon it. For young Mrs. Embury, under her soft and blonde exterior, has rather a sharp manner at times and, when necessary, can refer, in the pleasantest way, to things that have taken place in the past—and even the best Millersville families have their skeletons, forged cheques, little unnamed graves, jail sentences, things like that. So, after all, a worthless father can't be held against a person, these days, all things considered.

Mamie is getting to be a bit of a snob, though, even her best friends think, because she objects to Millersville's newest rich belonging to the "society" set and speaks about drawing more conservative lines. Her father was the black sheep of the family, it appears. The Carpenters are really an old Kentucky family and she often tells that her mother was one of the Virginia Prichards. Millersville knows that there

is a great deal in heredity—that blood will tell—so her friends can understand her seeming snobbishness.

Mamie is a charming hostess, and prettier than ever, even if she has grown a bit rounder, and her husband is devoted to her. A poor girl who married the richest man in town—it's beautiful—and it's such a relief, with so many sordid things going on every day, to see real romance, a genuine love match, once in a while.

PHANTOM

By John Hall Wheelock

ALONG the edge of the great moving sea,
That moaned forever on her barren bars,
The old, sad love came back again to me,
Moving quietly under the quiet stars.

Oh, sad love, do not smile upon me so,
Nodding so gently with your little head—
All the old wonder of your eyes is dead,
And the sea-winds have chilled you long ago.

WHAT puzzles every woman is the question whether it is pleasanter to be in love with a handsome man or to be loved by a rich one.

ONE always loves most the first time, but it is a good deal more comfortable the second time.

THERE are two ways to win a woman's love. One is to lie to her. So is the other.

NOTHING makes a woman more angry than to be made a saint against her will.

TREASURE-TROVE

By Lew Tennant

WHEN Uncle Rudolph died he left a map with a cross-mark to indicate the place down by the old apple-tree where the treasure was buried. John and I, his only heirs, set out to find it. We located the old apple-tree, and the stone that was marked on the map. Then we began to dig. Very carefully we dug.

Alas! John's shovel smashed the bottle!

WORSHIP

By Babette Deutsch

I AM to you the climbing sun,
The core of fire, the wings of light.
Your eyes are blinder than the night
To flames that flicker and aspire.

I am to you the deathless ache
Of music fled. Dark music heard
Above the close confusing word
So stammeringly said.

I am to you the Unknown God.
And so to you who fashioned me
In your soul's image, holily,
Look—I am kneeling too.

WHEN a woman's eyes sparkle like dew-drops, it is a sign (*a*) that she has just been kissed, (*b*) that she has just seen her husband kiss some other woman, or (*c*) that she has just had a contraband cocktail.

THE LOWDEN HOUSEHOLD

By L. M. Hussey

I

THIS laborious tour of the state on foot was young Albert Elliott's celebration of his freedom, his release from the durance of military service. It was the undertaking of a young man and a romantically imaginative one; he conceived the form of his holiday as a way of meeting more intimately with adventure than could be done in a motor, where one passed adventure by unseen in the dust stirred up in the road.

Nevertheless, having reached a point more than halfway to his goal, he had still failed to meet with any specially stirring excitement. He held recent recollections of a few pleasant encounters with pretty girls on the way; a tramp, the companion of an afternoon, had picked his pocket of small change; he had slept in a number of curious, small-town hotels, and under the sky more than once—it was all enjoyable, but a bit disappointing.

Then, swinging down at last into that picturesque eastern end of the state where at every mile one encounters an old house in which George Washington once spent a night, he met with the infant Phip bellowing loudly under a horse-chestnut tree, and calling tremendously, between howls, upon his invisible mother.

He was a very small boy, no more than four or five years old, dressed somewhat better than boys usually are in the country; he had a round face, red, dirty cheeks, and a strong voice. Elliott found no one near to give an ear to his complaint. The fields were quiet; somewhere, over the edge of a hill, a dog was barking.

Elliott approached and questioned him.

He said that his name was Phip, a short way of saying Philip. He explained that he was afraid to go home.

"Where do you live?" Elliott inquired. "Are you lost?"

The small boy shook his head and pointed down the road. Then Elliott asked him what he was afraid of.

It developed, from his explanation, that some cows had broken out of their pasture a short distance further on, and Phip, returning from an excursion that seemed to hold obscure elements of illegality, had been terrified at their presence and afraid to pass among them. This was a curious timidity for a country boy, but Elliott took his hand and offered to see him home.

They walked slowly down the road together. The boy was consoled now and grew somewhat talkative; he spoke gravely about politics and said that his father was a Republican and that he was one too; that he liked soldiers and intended to be one when he grew up; he would prefer to be the General.

Presently they came to a short lane. There was a farmhouse back among the trees. The boy recognized it as his home; Elliott was about to take leave of him when a woman ran down out of the lane, seized the child in her arms, and covered his dirty cheeks with her kisses.

Then she looked questioningly and a little suspiciously at the young man, who found it necessary to make an explanation.

"He was half a mile up the road and crying because he was afraid to pass some cows that were loose. I brought him back."

She was smiling now, and for a moment their eyes met frankly. Then a curious little confusion seemed to embarrass her; her eyes wavered and dropped and Elliott thought that she reddened a little. This self-consciousness in talking to him stirred his interest, especially as she was older than himself, the mother of the small boy, although by no means past her youth.

As she hesitated, apparently finding it difficult to thank him properly, he appraised her with a swift examination.

Her dress surprised him; it was simple but pretty, rather like the sort of summer frock one sees on a girl out for an informal walk in the city; like her boy, she was better dressed than people usually are at midday in the country. He found her figure a little fragile. He noticed her hands as they held the boy up in her arms; the fingers were long, slender, and white. Her face, too, was pale, with scarcely a suggestion of sunburn. She had brown hair, gray eyes, and a sensitive mouth.

He came to the conclusion that these folks had not been country people long.

Now she was thanking him, telling him that he was very kind, and in the midst of her nervously delivered words a man appeared in the lane and joined them with a direct look at Elliott, the stranger.

The woman let her boy slide down out of her arms and the child, apparently wishing to avoid the newcomer, ran up the lane and disappeared.

"This is Mr. Lowden—my husband," she said. "John, this gentleman found Phip up the road; he was afraid to come back. This gentleman brought him home. I've been thanking him."

The man smiled and held out his hand.

"I don't believe I've met you anywhere around here," he said. "I certainly am obliged to you for your trouble."

Elliott told Lowden his name and explained, briefly, that he was a stranger, a pedestrian doing a walking tour of the state.

Whilst in the course of his explanation he glanced at the woman. Her eyes were fastened intently upon his face with almost the naïveté of a child watching the lips of an adult during some alluring recitation; she averted her head at his glance.

Lowden, the husband, was quite cordial. He was a small man, older than his wife, with a certain severity of countenance that was not, however, impressive. The young man felt that he was the sort of chap one would not be able to warm up to easily. However, he appeared to have agreeable intentions.

"That's very interesting," he told Elliott. "I suppose you've had rough going, here and there. Where are you making for now?"

Elliott mentioned the name of the next town.

"That's over ten miles," said the older man. "You won't get there until three or four this afternoon. Where are you going to have lunch?"

"Well, I usually pick out one of the farmhouses along the road and persuade the people to sell me something to eat. I'll find one farther on."

Lowden shook his head.

"No use doing that," he said. "We're just about to eat, and we'll be glad to do you a favour in return for one you've done us. Come up to the house with us."

The young man was hungry; it was a pleasant suggestion, and they all walked up the lane together. The woman went on a little in front, the two men following. Lowden, who seemed to be a talkative man, was explaining that they had only been farmers for a period of less than two years; they were doing "scientific" farming, he said. This confirmed Elliott's first impression of the boy and his mother. They had lacked the country manner.

The lane turned into an ungraded lawn in front of the farmhouse and here and there farm implements were scattered about; a disc harrow, a plough

turned over on its side, the curved prongs of a dismantled hay rake. It did not look especially scientific.

Meanwhile, the experimental farmer was garrulously explaining his ideas to the stranger.

Elliott had no particular interest in his talk, but the man himself was interesting by contrast with the apparently sensitive and peculiar woman whom Elliott now knew to be his wife. He was watching the older man's face in a scrutinizing way when, at the side of the house, his feet became entangled in a coil of fence wire concealed in the grass; he stumbled, threw out his arms and fell.

He laughed in embarrassment, but as he attempted to rise a swift, sharp pain made him cry out involuntarily.

Lowden bent over him.

"What's the matter?" he asked. "Hurt yourself?"

The young man's face had whitened; he eased his foot a little to one side.

"I'm afraid you'll have to give me a lift," he said. "I—I seem to have pulled a tendon."

II

INDOORS, leaning back in a big chair in some pain, it was obvious at once that he could not go on. His ankle had swelled rapidly and now it was wrapped up in wet cloths to ease his discomfort. Again, Lowden showed that he was a man with decent intentions.

"Don't worry," he said. "We have plenty of room and we can put you up for a week or so until you're able to get over to town and take a train. Your trip is spoiled, that's certain; I surely am sorry."

It was a generous offer and Elliott was ashamed that he still felt a little repelled by the man. He explained it as a prejudice based upon the other's unprepossessing appearance. Lowden's smallness of figure had, in an obscure way, a weazened touch. His face, too, was small, and excessively lined; the black eyes, covered with spectacles, lacked warmth. His hair was of the bristling sort that stood up all over his head like a wild growth of thick, stubborn grass.

The young man, who had been helped into a comfortable living-room, evidently remodelled when the experimental farmers took over the house, was naturally unable to walk into the dining-room for his luncheon; it was brought in to him by Lowden's young wife. He had almost forgotten her in the discomfort and surprise of the last half hour.

Just prior to her appearance with the tray of hot dishes he had been startled by the sudden, yet familiar, howls of the small boy, Phip, apparently coming out of the kitchen. At the termination of this disturbance Mrs. Lowden appeared abruptly and the young man was surprised to see that her face was quite pale; the lower lip was puckered a little in one corner, as if she held a bit of the inner edge between her concealed teeth. She set the tray on a small table in front of the sufferer.

"What's the matter with the little boy?" he asked. "Has he hurt himself?"

She did not meet his eyes, answering with a nervous abruptness:

"No, Mr. Lowden has been giving him a whipping for running away up the road."

Elliott smiled sympathetically.

"Oh, that's too bad," he said.

The woman faced him, and her pale cheeks were coloured with a swift rush of crimson.

"It's a shame!" she exclaimed. "It's . . . brutal!"

Her aggressive mood collapsed like a bubble and again she dropped her eyes.

"I shouldn't have said that," she murmured. "I suppose he's *got* to be punished when he doesn't obey. But I hate to see him whipped!"

The touch of intimacy brought about by her impulsive declaration obviously embarrassed her now, and she answered several of Elliott's casual questions without looking at him. She inquired if he were easier, murmured something about being sorry, and then left the

room in the manner of one making an uncomfortable retreat.

Lowden came in later and once more assured the young man of his hospitality, told him there was no cause for worry, and then talked for half an hour about a scheme for raising drug plants that bored Elliott more than he felt to be rational.

Again he observed that Lowden lacked the gift, however generous his acts, of arousing a cordial response. Moreover, he appeared to be unaware of his deficiency.

During the afternoon Elliott amused himself, when his foot was not throbbing with a pain that absorbed all his other attention, by looking through some books Lowden had left on the little table, pulled around at his side. His mood was somewhat petulant now; he complained of his fortune, and felt uncomfortable about his situation, for, after all, he was the enforced guest of strangers. Even the young wife, with her pretty frailty, and her curious, diffident response to himself, failed to interest him now.

Later she brought in his supper, but there were no more impulsive confidences, and when she came back, after it was dark, she was accompanied by her husband and the little boy.

The lights were turned on and they all sat in the room together. Lowden gave the young man a bad cigar and began to talk again, a monologue that now seemed natural and characteristic. He was depreciating the empirical methods of the usual farmer, and elaborating upon his own. Elliott found it all very tiresome, and after a short time took little precaution against showing his boredom, but the older man was oblivious to that, and continued to talk, slowly, endlessly, with an irritating air of finality in judgment.

His wife was silent. At first she took up a book to read, but presently the young man, stealing glances at her quiet figure, discovered that she was sitting in her chair, the book opened across her knees, staring off into the room like a devotee lost in contemplation. A swift sympathy for her came into his emotions, almost as an inspiration. How tired she must have grown of Lowden, of his terrible monologues!

He imagined her mute, enslaved, listening to the man, her ears assaulted through all the days of the year by the unrippled stream of his dusty words. She was the sort to desire another kind of companionship—and Elliott saw that the older man would be inevitably oblivious to her need.

She disappeared at last, taking little Phip up to bed, but as she went, turning a moment at the door to say good-night, she met Elliott's eyes and he could not restrain a piteous look that embraced not only his own bored predicament, but what he knew would be endlessly hers. His glance startled her; he saw her eyes widen, and then, although he could not be sure in the dusk of the room, he thought she blushed. At any rate, she turned quickly and led her boy out through the opened door.

Lowden released his prisoner at last and, giving him a cane for support, helped him to climb the stairs to the bedroom that had been prepared for him. It was a painful journey, and he found himself so exhausted that sleep came immediately, without any contemplation of the Lowden household.

III

THE next morning he was better, although of course he could bear no weight upon the injured ankle. He hobbled his way down the stairs and took his breakfast with the others in the dining-room.

Lowden seemed glad to see him, and when the young man suggested that he would be in shape to go on in two or three days the other denied his optimism with emphasis, insisted that he remain in their home until he was perfectly well. This showed, Elliott thought with a twinge of bitter recollection, his appreciation of a new victim for his garrulity. It was a bad predicament. The young man saw no lane of escape.

As appeared to be her custom, Low-

den's young wife was silent during the meal. Elliott felt that this was not entirely characteristic; he found her rather hopelessly and unnaturally subdued. Lowden did all the talking. He spoke upon the subject of soya beans and the fixation of nitrogen, declaring that the farmer who bought fertilizer was therefore an ass. The expounding of his doctrine was interrupted only long enough to dismiss young Phip from the table for some infraction of the house etiquette. As the child left the room under the lash of his father's sarcasm, Elliott glanced at the mother. Her eyes were downcast, and her face had paled.

After breakfast the invalid went into the living-room again, sat down as before, taking up one of the books to read. Perhaps half an hour had gone by when he was surprised to see Mrs. Lowden enter and stand just inside the door, looking at him expectantly.

He understood at once that she had come in only to speak to him, but now she was unable to find words. He felt it necessary to speak himself; he made some trivial remark about the day.

She nodded, came farther into the room, and stood near his chair, looking down into his face.

"I've been worried about some things I said to you yesterday," she began, abruptly. Elliott felt a little confused. At the same time, he experienced his former sense of pride that she should react to him with such an obvious diffidence. A degree of adventurous expectancy stirred in him remotely.

"Oh, you didn't say anything to worry about," he replied.

She shook her head, in doubt.

"It must have seemed queer to you," she said. "I'd only just seen you once before. We were strangers."

"No, it didn't seem queer. Just natural."

She was silent for a moment. Her eyes were averted now, but the desire of saying something further held her at his side.

Then she met his eyes again, speaking in a low voice. Her query was almost forced out of unwilling lips.

"Why did you look at me the way you did last night?" she asked. "I mean, when I was taking Phip up to bed?"

Her question astonished him; its curious directness was wholly unexpected from her.

He hesitated, began to speak and stopped, finding words very difficult.

Moreover, a sense of his youth rushed upon him, and although the girl at his side was also young, she was nevertheless a married woman, and therefore, he felt, his superior in experience.

"Well," he began at last, "I thought you knew what I meant. I . . . I thought you agreed with me. . . ."

She shook her head, but when she spoke there was no angry colour in her voice, and he believed her a little insincere.

"It wasn't kind of you," she said. "John is a very good man. He's good to everybody. He's been good to you."

Her words made young Elliott ashamed; after all, they were doubtless fundamentally true. It seemed impossible now that he could have taken such a liberty—to depreciate this woman's husband on the first day of their meeting, whilst he was a guest in the house.

"You must pardon me," he murmured.

"Oh, don't feel bad about it!" she exclaimed, apparently eager now to remove all the sting of her half-hearted rebuke.

She turned around, looked for the nearest chair, and sat down. Now she was smiling, with a certain expectant shyness.

"Won't you tell me something about your trip?" she asked. "It sounds so interesting! And I'm so dull here; I've been so dull ever since we came out to the country. It seems to me I never hear anything about the world. Sometimes I feel as if I'd stopped living—like someone lost in a nightmare, you know."

His aplomb returned, and with it the little zest, the vague sense of adventure, that her presence gave him. He

began to tell her about his small experiences; her interest was disproportionate to their value.

She listened with her gray eyes meeting his own intently. Her cheeks were coloured a little and something long pent escaped into her features, illuminating them with a touch of obscure excitement. Despite the innocence of their conversation, Elliott felt an irrational flavour of something illicit in it.

He expanded, delighted with the interest of his audience and his own importance; he was gesturing freely when Lowden unexpectedly entered the room. The two turned to meet his gaze with the momentary air of conspirators, and a sudden frown cut deeper the lines between his eyes.

His wife stood up quickly.

"Mr. Elliott has been telling me about his tour," she said. "Isn't it a shame that he's met with such a mean accident?"

Lowden's touch of displeasure vanished; he nodded.

"But now he's here," he said, "he's going to stay until that ankle is strong again. Don't let him persuade you that he can go on to-morrow or the next day."

The atmosphere was cleared. A penetrating howl from young Phip, in trouble somewhere in the house, took Mrs. Lowden hurriedly from the room. Lowden sat down to talk.

With a face of despair the young man listened.

IV

He made a rapid improvement, and in three or four days was able to walk about with the aid of the cane; he knew that in a few more days he could easily go. But now, despite his sufferings from Lowden's assaults, he found himself regretful at the close prospect of parting from these people.

In fact, he was deeply interested in the young wife. It was not an interest that he accepted with sophistication, being still too youthfully naïve for that, but he was unable to deny its strength. He was troubled; sometimes, talking to Lowden, he felt very caddish, for the man had undoubtedly been decent in his intentions.

Since their interrupted talk there had been no additional confidences between the two. Once, passing through the hall, they had come face to face, and the girl had smiled suddenly, going on without a word. Her smile, coming to her lips with a spontaneity that was at once surprising and immeasurably charming, had stirred young Elliott beyond his expectation.

He found himself thinking of her, off and on, at all hours. He thought of her sentimentally; he visioned her as a flower denied the sun. The quality of her fragile loveliness strengthened his simile.

Lowden's crude obliviousness to her need angered him. She was the sort of woman made for the delicacies of emotion, delicate attentions, subtle considerations. Lowden, a stupid, tiresome man, was her captor, holding her spirit in the chains of his obtuseness.

How had such a man ever secured her initial regard? This was too great a problem for young Elliott, who was still youthful enough to seek and expect a certain rationality in the arrangement of life. He came to the confused, erroneous opinion that in the beginning Lowden must have employed some sort of misrepresentation, a dressing up in peacock's feathers, a low sort of chicanery, holding out hopes for whose fulfilment he had no plans. In these moments he was angry and the husband took on a sinister aspect.

Accompanying his other emotions was one of self-congratulation, a sweet expanding of his ego. The girl, for all that she was married, admired him, found him interesting, appreciated his contrast with Lowden's stupidity. He began to understand his own charm and a pleasant assurance from this recognition gave him many comfortable hours. His success was an argument for an agreeable future, with others. . . .

Several days passed.

Then at the dinner table one evening Elliott announced his intention of leaving the following day. His host de-

murred, but the young man maintained his determination.

Mrs. Lowden left the table before the others, and after she had gone Lowden invited his guest to drive a few miles that evening in the car on some business relating to the farm.

"I'd like you to go along," he said.

The young man found it difficult to decline, but his plea that he was afraid the trip might shake him up too much for his start the next day was finally accepted.

After Lowden had gone he wandered out to the lawn, where he sat down alone on a bench. He languidly watched the distant progress of a herd of cattle moving across the top of the hill beyond the road. His mood was one of half-contented melancholy, such as one feels at twilight.

The country was quiet, cloaked with peace. Elliott watched the cattle disappear and after them a small boy, the herdsman, who carried a long stick that waved like a jet wand as he descended over the summit of the hill. A rabbit ran across the lawn in ungainly leaps. The flush of the departed sun began to fade out of the sky.

Elliott arose, took up his cane and walked toward the house. He entered by the front door, passed through the short hall, and walked into the living-room.

In the dusk, away from the window, he found Mrs. Lowden. Her face was clasped in her two concealing hands, and she was sobbing.

He stood just inside the door, staring at her slender, shadowy figure. A second later she looked up, and, seeing him there, concealed her face again between her hands.

He crossed the room and stood near her.

"What's the matter?" he asked. "What's happened?"

She did not answer; he repeated his question.

Her voice came out between her fingers, subdued, half broken.

"I thought you'd gone with John," she murmured.

He shook his head.

"No. I thought . . . I might have a chance to talk to you."

His words were spoken with a sense of daring; he had hardly intended them. She did not look up, although she withdrew her hands, that fell into her lap.

"What's the matter?" he asked again.

"Nothing . . . ." she whispered. And then, raising her face suddenly: "Why did you want to talk to me?"

"Because—"

He found it impossible to explain, although his reason was clear enough in his mind. Her fragile face, that wavered now like a night blossom in the shadowed mists of her disordered hair, enchanted him, and at last he yielded himself to this charm without restraint. She had her allure; he found her sweet.

He drew a little closer to her.

"I know you're unhappy!" he exclaimed. "*He* doesn't give you what you've hoped for, does he? I've watched you; I've felt so sorry for you. I've felt too, as if—as if *I'd* been cheated!"

She looked up at him swiftly.

"What do you mean?"

Then his words had not angered her! She admitted his accusation, admitted the failure of her content.

"I saw that you were not happy the first day I came," he added.

She was still looking up into his face.

"What right have you to say this?" she whispered.

Urged beyond his resistance, thrilled with a pulsing excitement, he put out his hand; it touched the soft strands of her hair. She did not stir. He bent over her, took her cheeks between his hands and kissed the line of her half concealed lips. He felt them give back the pressure of his own.

He knelt at her side and her slim hands came about his neck, her slender fingers ran in slow caresses through his thick hair.

"Dear boy," she murmured. "I'm not unhappy now! Do you think I'm very bad? I don't care, dear. I needed you so much; I was so long waiting for you! Think how blind I was when I married him—I thought I could give

him love! Dear, my dear, it is wonderful that you came to me!"

He listened to her romantic words, finding them significant, endowing them, in his romantic imagination, with a stirring significance. He was proud, glad, thrilled. He drew her dim face to his lips; he ran his fingers across the smooth texture of her cool skin.

He was holding her lips to his own, her arms imprisoned him, when someone crossed the outer porch, entered the hall: it was Lowden's step.

Elliott started with surprise and drew backward, but her arms did not release him.

"I didn't expect him now!" he muttered.

Close to his ear her voice whispered, trembling with her excitement.

"I don't care! I won't let you go! I don't care!"

Her abandon astonished him; he remembered all her former diffidence, her little embarrassments, her shy retreats. Now, in the moment of danger, he found his romantic urge inadequate.

After all, he did not love her; the fervour of her starved emotions repelled his own. His little, innocent zest of adventure did not measure to the terrifying sentiment she indulged.

He drew in his breath, set his muscles to break the bond of the woman's arms. He could hear the breath of the man in the hall.

Then Lowden moved on and the sound of his footfall diminished in the house.

The girl's arms fell; Elliott stood erect. He found that he was trembling. He looked down into her face.

Her head was tilted back, but she did not seem to see him. The look of languorous delight had gone from her face, and, coming there only in that moment, was realization—and terror. She understood now the incredible proportions of her own temerity. With Lowden gone she visioned to herself what might have happened.

Without a word young Elliott moved softly toward the door.

V.

He found it difficult to sleep that night. He regretted his insane impulsiveness, the movement of his hand that had brought the touch of her hair. He recalled her words of ardour, the seeming claim she made upon him, and in spite of his last view of her, when her moment of abandon had passed, he was afraid of what she might do in the morning. Suppose her strange impulsiveness betrayed him then, precipitated a scene?

He went to sleep at last, and when he awoke and dressed he found it difficult to go down to breakfast. Finally he forced himself to that necessity, descended the stairs, entered the dining-room. Lowden and his wife were already there, waiting. Lowden said good-morning; the girl was silent.

As they sat down to the table their glances met.

She looked into his eyes with a swift, imploring significance — and, understanding, he felt an immeasurable relief. Her glance asked him to forget.

After breakfast she disappeared. Lowden was unable to drive Elliott over to town himself; he was to be taken there by the hired man. The car was waiting outside.

The men shook hands, said words of parting. Young Elliott got into the car, the hired man followed. Then the woman appeared on the porch and he turned and waved to her.

She did not raise her hand, but only nodded with her head. Standing there in the early morning, touched with sunlight, she looked infinitely fragile; once more Elliott's sense of pity stirred in his heart, mingled with a certain satisfaction.

After all, he had given her something. The thought brought him, for the first time in his life, the feeling of having lived, a vague appreciation of limitations, of an end to all experiences, to even life itself. Confused in his emotions was a recognition of the fundamental disharmonies that thwart all

hopes, raising up problems beyond solution: *her* problem.

The hired man started the engine. At that moment young Phip rushed across the lawn and sprang on the running board. He insisted on being taken along; Lowden called to him to come away. Phip ignored the command; Elliott was laughing.

"Get down, Phip," he said.

Phip shook his head.

Then Lowden ran forward, pulled the boy from his perch, and, turning him over on his knee, began to administer an extemporaneous punishment. The child howled, and his cries were mingled with the roar of the engine as the car jerked forward.

It turned into the lane. Elliott could hear Lowden's voice admonishing the boy. The sharp sound of his descending palm had ceased.

"There!" he said. "I'll give you more if you like it. Do you like it?"

The question was repeated, coming a little faintly now.

"Do you like it?"

Phip's voice, clearing, sputtering with his grief, floated down into the lane.

"I—I—l-like the s-sound, but I d-d-don't like the feel!" he wailed.

Laughing, Elliott looked back again. The girl had gone and swiftly the young man had a picture of her, erect, rebelling against her destiny, her pale face suffused with the colour of her indignant anger.

THE GOLDEN BELL

By Patience Worth

LOVE is a golden bell
With a silver tongue,
But the tongue, be it gone,
Maketh o' the golden bell
An empty thing.

WHEN a man shuts his eyes when he kisses it may signify either that he is bashful or that he is marrying the girl for her money.

A WOMAN is getting old when she begins admiring the rounded curve of a boy's face instead of the squared jaw of a man's.

UNDER twenty a girl blushes; between twenty and thirty she tries hard to look indignant; after thirty she gives three cheers.

GENIUS

By John F. Lord

HE was the owner of a large department store. He wished to have his women customers enter by a certain door, yet he found it difficult to lead them to do so. In spite of numerous printed signs, they persisted in using other entrances. Finally he hit upon a bright idea. Over the entrance he wished them to use he painted, in large letters, the word *Exit*.

PAN PIPES

By Vincent Starrett

THE bank which in my wanderings
Sometimes I chance to pass,
Has handsome crystal chandeliers
And doors of polished brass . . .

Oh, once I had a copper cent;
I didn't have it long.
I spent my penny for a pipe
And piped a little song.

And many pass with eager tread
Into the banker's place,
And drop their dollars in his box,
With shining eyes and face . . .

Oh, once I piped a little song
For tired little men:
But still they put their dollars in
And take them out again.

WOMAN'S most painfully delightful pastime is listening for the telephone that never rings.

THE THIRD WOMAN

By Lew Hewitt

I

IT is a mistake to imagine that all the luxurious homes on Long Island border the coast. The Porlands' did not; and it is as graceful outside and as well fitted out inside as any home built and owned by a man with an income ranging from thirty to fifty thousand a year might be.

On this especial June morning the Porlands stood at their *porte cochère*, helping into the trim car with the equally trim chauffeur no less a personage than Miss Elsie Tenniel.

Mrs. Porland held the actress' hand in her own for a much longer time than is required by the conventions.

"And you must be sure to run down again in August, just as soon as we come back. I don't know when I've enjoyed anything so much as your visit."

Miss Tenniel opened her big black eyes with that expression of wonderment that fitted so well her youth and good looks. In spite of an air of sophistication, she radiated a childish joy of living.

"Oh, I'll come," she said eagerly. "I'm so glad that you want me that I—I hardly know what to say."

She turned to the maker of plays. "And I suppose while you're climbing the Rocky Mountains I must keep right on pointing revolvers at people, and planning robberies, and reforming, and doing all the other things a poor crook girl in a play has to do."

Porland laughed a little uneasily. She was now holding his hand in her own.

"We must write another kind of play for you," he said. "I know Mrs. Porland won't give me any peace till I sit down to it."

The girl thanked him with a parting pat on the back of his hand.

"Oh, if you just would!"

As Mrs. Porland waved for the last time to the speeding car, she turned sharply to her husband.

"And now," she said, "now you've seen for yourself. Isn't she everything I said? Isn't she *just* the one?"

Leading the way to the broad veranda, Bobby Porland sought out the biggest and softest of all the big and soft wicker chairs. Then, carefully disregarding the contents of the smoking stand, he lit a large drop-jewelled pipe.

"I don't like her," he said between puffs. "I don't like any of 'em, and I don't want anything to do with any of 'em. I write plays; they act 'em; that ends it. Besides, it's a cinch I can't write the sort of drama you want me to write."

With her softest and most wheedling manner, Mrs. Porland seated herself on the arm of the chair. "You'll be doing it for me, Robert. I know that if you tried you could write a play that would be something with true feeling and emotion, something better than all these bread-and-butter artificialities. And Miss Tenniel is the one person to play it. She's just a good competent leading woman now—that's all the managers know about her. But *I* know she has possibilities, wonderful possibilities. Look at her eyes. I tell you, Robert, she feels, and she can express what she feels."

It was the last of many discussions on the subject, but this time Mrs. Porland broke down the final barriers of her husband's resistance.

"Well," he agreed finally, "I'll tackle

it; but I know before starting that I can't make a go of it and that there's no use trying. As for this Tenniel woman—" He rammed home a fresh pipeful of tobacco—"I wish she'd stayed in her stock company in Greenland—or Fargo, North Dakota, or wherever she came from."

Without undergoing any of the hardships of genius, Porland had acquired an income, a waistline, and a wife. All these things had come to him by degrees.

When his father died at the end of Bobby's sophomore year at Princeton, the young man found a job in the box-office of one of Carstein's theatres. Those were the halcyon days of the "ten-twenty-thirty" attractions, of noble heroes, spotless heroines and very black villains. One afternoon, when a minor but essential character died without giving notice, Bobby and Bobby's college education were called upon to help the stage manager shift the lines. A natural knack at that sort of thing proved Bobby's prowess to such an extent that he was bequeathed a decrepit play to revamp into modern ways.

Thereupon Bobby emerged a playwright. He created noble heroes, spotless heroines, very black villains, gun persuasions, prison escapes, practicable cyclones and plausible shipwrecks in such quantity and variety that the melodrama came to a last golden flowering in Bobby Porland. "Tracked by Fire" was his; also, "The Hero of the Deadwood Mail"; also "Lady Elaine, the Beautiful Errand Girl." With the passing of the thriller Bobby turned placidly to the crook *motif*, and his earnings of earlier days proved paltry beside the royalties from "Hicks All!" and many another drama of the virtues of the underworld.

In the meantime, he had married, and had grown older, so that now he was in the comfortable middle thirties, with plenty of money and nothing to worry him except Mrs. Porland's ambition that he do "something worth while" in a play.

It was really Bobby's unhappy profession which had kindled the fires of Mrs. Porland's soul. If he had remained in the business end of the theatrical game, she might have passed an endurable existence as the misunderstood but intellectual helpmeet of a commonplace business man. But Bobby had staked out his claim on the borderland of culture, thus forcing Mrs. Porland into a continuous martyrdom. ("Oh, yes, Mrs. Porland, the wife of the dramatist!" and then the lifted eyebrows, and, after her back was turned, the amused cynical smile.) If only Bobby's melodramas hadn't been so well known! If only he had never written "Lady Elaine, the Beautiful Errand Girl!" No wonder Mrs. Porland fretted at the stigma.

So, quite as natural evolution, he was driven to Art.

II

In spite of fragmentary notes, mainly dictated by Mrs. Porland, it was not till they returned from the Western trip that Bobby actually began work on his new venture.

"Carstein doesn't want me to do it; he says there's no money in it," he announced after a week of fruitless labour. "He's jumping crazy for another crook stunt like 'The Shadow Man.'"

Mrs. Porland was relentless. "He will find there is more money in artistically sound plays than in anything else. All you have to do is write one, and I know you can."

This assurance should have strengthened Bobby, but it did not. As in the preparation of his earlier efforts, he carefully dredged the newspapers for clippings that might aid his ingenuity in placing and marionetting his characters. But the clippings that he sorted threw no light on the play now in preparation. They would have been invaluable for one fathering noble heroes, spotless heroines, and very black villains; but Mrs. Porland had said:

"Your new play is to have nobody in it except human beings, and so please—*please* don't drag in any Jack Daltons, or Edward Throckmortons, or—or any Lady Elaines."

"But I—I just don't see the kind of play you do want me to write. I'm not interested in it; I can't visualize it. You want a play with emotion, with a vampire, with—"

"Not a vampire, you silly! A woman who's leading her own life."

"Well, then, a woman who's leading her own life. And you want to take a man who's perfectly satisfied and comfortable, and let this woman who's leading her own life come in and smash everything up. Now, I don't see any sense to that rigmarole. I can't understand why he should do it. Why does he want another woman? It looks a darned sight more unreasonable than all the Jack Dalton stuff ever written."

But Mrs. Porland only smiled with firm lips and wheedlingly held the match for his pipe.

By day Bobby sweated in his New York office, conscientiously reading Ibsen, Suderman, Shaw, and all the Hungarians, Finns, and Russians on the list neatly prepared for him by his wife. Also he tried to think of various emotional people he had known, and what they had said when they were emoting. In desperation, he even purchased a miniature theatre, "with lighting effects complete," and tiny dolls which could be moved about as characters in their progress from R. C. to L. U. E. But in spite of these aids to the dramatist, Bobby's play didn't get ahead.

At times when the strain became unbearable, he took to the open streets in the hope of overhearing some snatch of conversation that would set him on the right track. His good-natured face that had fastened upon him the genial name of "Bobby" lost its fresh, unworried look; people who were on the verge of saying "Bobby" ended with an apologetic "Mr. Porland." Even his laugh suffered; and Nat Goodwin himself had once said it was worth travelling from California just to tell Bobby a new story at the Players' Club and hear him laugh.

But the play eventually reached its final state of typewritten pages and a blue cover. And on a certain September evening Bobby, his face drooping with all the eloquent lines of despair, entered his New York apartment.

"It's no good," he announced grumpily. "Carstein has seen it. I made him listen to me while I read it, too, and he says it's hopeless; that's the long and the short of it."

He flung on the table the bound script.

"Robert Porland!" His wife, hands grasping the lapels of his coat, looked squarely into his face. "I'm ashamed of you."

She picked up the despised play and ran over the pages.

"Why, oh, why didn't you let somebody help you? Don't you see you've done just the old thing over again. You haven't put life into it. It isn't convincing. Your heroine is only Lady Elaine, even if you do call her Mrs. Simmons. Let me think."

Helplessly Bobby frowned at the nearest Japanese print. It seemed as fragmentary and detached as his own mental state.

Mrs. Porland returned to the charge: "Why don't you take the simple idea we decided on, and work it out just as simply? We said that there were three women in this man's life: his first 'kid' sweetheart, his wife, and the third woman. Now, instead of calling this 'Hidden Pools,' which gives it a sickly poetic flavour, why not call it 'The Third Woman?'"

"That's a good title," said Bobby, "but there haven't been three women in *my* life. And I haven't any sympathy with a man who falls for a third woman. You can call it melodrama or anything else you like, but I believe that people who do wrong get the worst of it every time."

"You're writing a play. Besides, there are exceptional instances."

"But I haven't any sympathy with the notion."

"Then you should talk with somebody who has." Mrs. Porland frowned slightly. Then her forehead again became smooth. "Robert, how long be-

fore 'The Shadow Man' goes on the road?"

Bobby reflected.

"It's run almost a year now. Carstein says it will be good for three months more."

"Then, Robert—"

"Yes?"

"Listen to me. When you do write your big play, Elsie Tenniel is to be the star. That's settled. And Elsie Tenniel is the one to help you write 'The Third Woman.' We shall open the house on Long Island and invite her down over Sunday. We can all talk it over together; then later, as it begins to unfold, you can talk it over with her."

Bobby made a last stand. "I don't want to talk it over with her. I tell you, I don't like stage people. I—"

"Sunday," interrupted Mrs. Poland. "And we'll motor down Saturday night after the play."

III

THE holiday season had come and gone, and the annual crop of mushroom plays had sprung up only to be blown away to the immemorial store-house. There was no other first night in the Big City when "The Third Woman" made its bow to New York at Carstein's own theatre.

From an obscure seat in the rear of the house, Mrs. Porland watched the gradual transformation of a supercilious audience that had come to jeer into an emotional unit that swayed with the fortunes of the painted men and women on the stage. Bobby Porland, manufacturer of cheap thrills for the cheap ones, had suddenly become a dramatist. And tomorrow Elsie Tenniel would no longer be a competent, hard-working actress, but the talk of theatrical New York.

There were tears in Mrs. Porland's own eyes over the bitter pathos of the first act; and when man and mistress sat down to reckon calmly the cost of their love (before the passionate climax that marked the second curtain), Mrs. Porland forgot that she was listening only to a tale of imaginary woe and stress. The superb acting and self-control of Elsie Tenniel carried her away just as it carried away the blasé first-nighters. And when the end came, the end that made even hardened Broadway gasp, because there was no final reckoning, because the erring lovers had found and kept their paradise, Mrs. Porland knew that her husband had accomplished the task she set for him. He had written a play that was Art.

And Art it was, if the newspaper critics were to be trusted the next morning.

"Mr. Porland no longer manufactures alarm clocks to wake the sluggish," commented the *American;* "instead, at the Carstein last night, a very artistic boudoir timepiece of his patterning struck thirteen. Indeed, it is so artistic that one is inclined to forget the boudoir."

"If you must break the moral law," observed the *Tribune*, 'The Third Woman' will show you how to accomplish your ends with the maximum of artistic effect."

"That there is no defence for the morals taught in this play is certain," the *Globe* decided, "but a majority will argue with some reason that if you do a thing beautifully it is its own excuse; and in Mr. Porland's new play there is no denying that he has done it beautifully. There is no questioning the sincerity of the piece. It has been written with a comprehension of the tremendous basic facts of life, a clear-seeing which has not commonly been credited to the dramatist in question. It is the product of wisdom and experience."

Later, in the theatrical columns of *Life*, "The Third Woman" was listed, "A salacious episode artistically handled."

And one and all of the critics went into rhapsodies over the work of the star, for her appeal in the famous second act had definitely stamped her as one of the best of the new school of emotional actresses. Her individual hit had been almost as great as that of the play.

It was the lure of the star that had

held Mrs. Porland's attention during the first performance. The play was her husband's, but she hugged the belief that the discovery of the girl was her own. Even the second night she spent watching Miss Tenniel's irresistible appeal to the villain-hero; the appeal that urged him from his dusty dry-rot to new life and fresh adventure.

But during the seventh performance of "The Third Woman," Mrs. Porland became quietly aware of something much more portentous. Quite unexpectedly it came to her that the character played by the male lead was not altogether unfamiliar. Words, even phrases, deepened the impression. The "hero" of the play was none other than —Bobby. In the drama he was tall and slender; he was not a successful playwright, but a struggling sculptor; he talked, not baseball, but poetry. Yet he was—Bobby. And the lady who lived her own life continued to live it—with Bobby.

Mrs. Porland attempted to think calmly. She wished to get up and leave, that she might argue the suspicions with herself, but the lure of seeing again the action unfold was too strong for her. With new, breathless interest she followed the fortunes of the pair through the tumultuous second act and the serene but unhallowed happiness of the third. She left the theatre in a daze.

Bobby had not planned to accompany her home. After each performance he was busy planning minute changes in the stage business, he had told her.

She made her way alone to the apartment. The maid had already retired, but on the little table beside her bed Mrs. Porland found her accumulation of afternoon mail. There was the usual grist of announcements and conventional letters, together with others, more pleasant, which had begun coming with the success of "The Third Woman."

The Sunday editor of the *World* wanted her picture for a feature he was preparing on "Wives of Celebrated Men." A woman's club in Brooklyn would esteem it a great honour if she would address it on "Some Phases of the Modern Drama." They knew of her reputation as a student of this literary form, and the fact that her husband was the creator of a masterpiece meant, they were certain, that a portion of its success, at least, was attributable to her influence. A little informal talk on the influence of the wife, etc.

Unheeded the letter dropped from her relaxed fingers.

An eager little soul from Greenwich Village had picked bizarre phrases to tell her what a wonderful woman she must be—it was "a pleasant coolth in a sun-stagnant world" to know that such "comrade-wives" as Mrs. Porland existed.

Mrs. Porland remembered that on the first night she had told some reporter that not only was she in complete sympathy with her husband's effort but that she had urged him to its completion. And this little fool from Greenwich Village had taken the play to be a transcript from their own lives.

A transcript! Was it?

Suddenly all the glory of the play's triumph turned to dust and ashes; for in winning the place to which she aspired she found that she had lost something better.

But had she lost? Wasn't it all just a sickly imagining? Bobby, dear old simple-souled Bobby—why, she couldn't have lost him! It was impossible. He had written well, of course, but it was absurd to suppose that in the writing he had drawn from his own experience. He had merely talked matters over with Elsie Tenniel, and out of her past had come the life-giving substance of the play.

Yes, it was Elsie Tenniel's play, not Bobby's. That was it. But Miss Tenniel must keep her place. Mrs. Porland would have to talk with Bobby, a nice frank talk, and she would tactfully suggest a trip to the South Seas. Bobby had always wanted to go to the South Seas. He still had childish ideas about cannibals and all that. Dear, stupid, sweet Bobby!

The telephone rang.

It was Carstein.

"Hello! That you, Mrs. Porland? I haven't seen Bobby all day; tried to get him at the theatre, but they said he'd gone. No, nothing wrong. Just got a cable from London, and I'm leaving first thing in the morning. I'm telephoning from the docks."

"Is—is there some message I can give?"

"Not a message, Mrs. Porland. But I want you to keep Bobby working and make him turn out another play as good as 'The Third Woman.' That's all. You've got a young Shakespeare there, Mrs. Porland, if you can keep him at it. Say 'good-bye' to Bobby for me, and don't forget, Mrs. Porland, that I'm mighty grateful to you for coming in with a club and making me produce 'The Third Woman.' I never thought he had it in him."

Mrs. Porland waited.

The clock ticked the hour hand past twelve, past one, and within minutes of two.

Then Bobby.

"You've been sitting up for me?"

Unable for the moment to speak, she contented herself by nodding.

There was an uneasiness about him that she had not noticed before. He fumbled at his pockets; then, crossing the room, he stared fixedly at a little water-colour on the wall. She noticed, as though for the first time, that the artist had limned with delicate pinks and greens an apple orchard in full bloom. It was appetizingly done. One could almost smell the wind of spring, capricious with the flood and energy of fresh youth.

In spite of her wish to allow him to speak first, she herself broached the subject.

"What is it, Bobby?"

He turned to her.

His eyes, which had once been the open books of his mind, were now narrowed and inscrutable.

"I'm sorry, but I—can't run down to Atlantic City with you Sunday, as we planned. I've just come from Carstein, and he says I must spend the week-end with him at his country place, talking over my new play. Sorry, but I've got to do it. I won't be back till late Monday."

For a full ten seconds he stared boldly at her, before he turned away to scrutinize once more the picture of the apple blossoms.

Mrs. Porland nodded again, though her husband's back was turned and he could not see her.

She did not protest. It was too late for anything of that sort.

THE compliments a woman hates are: Being called a "nice girl," being told her nose is "strong and characterful," and having a handsome man show her perfect respect in a taxicab.

THE test of friendship is in the welcome; the test of love is in the farewell.

THE PROBLEM THAT PERPLEXED NICHOLSON

By Elisabeth Sanxay Holding

A VERY serious young man, was Nicholson. I have never met anyone so concerned, so morbidly concerned with abstract principles. I have the most vivid memories of him in those days before the war—days so immeasurably distant!—tramping along at my side, talking interminably about "ethics." It was his passion. He would call at my office and wait for me almost any length of time, if in the end he might be rewarded by walking home with me, to discuss what he called "an interesting point or so." He would have in his pocket little items he had cut out of the newspapers, cases that had come up in the police courts, and so on, which he wanted to analyze.

I rather dreaded him and his "ethics," and yet I never had the heart to cut short his lengthy propositions. I used to listen to him and even argue with him, very much as one might oblige a chess fiend by playing a game with him. Because the poor devil was so solitary and alone in the world; he hadn't, never had had, another friend, and he was always so outrageously sure of being welcome to me.

A lean, dour young Scot, he had made his own way in life, against every sort of obstacle; he had studied law and been called to the bar, and was then waiting for clients, living in a decent sort of poverty. He wasn't pitiful, in spite of the bleak youth behind him, and his equally bleak present, because he was so confident of success and so absolutely the sort to whom success is inevitable. He had no pleasures, no recreations of any sort; never even read a novel, nothing but these ethical discussions.

The one thing that saved him was his utter lack of egoism. His ethical problems were never personal ones; he didn't even appear to be interested in himself. His questions were always general, and I must admit that his immense and guileless seriousness, combined with this lack of self-consciousness, touched me. And his ingenuousness. He was very fond of quoting judicial decisions and then, at great length, comparing what he called the legal with the ethical aspect. Myself a lawyer twenty years his senior, I never confounded the two.

Even the war, when it came, presented itself to Nicholson as an impersonal problem in ethics. Whether the situation justified the extreme measures he observed being taken?

"It's not a thing to think about," I told him. "One has to be satisfied with feeling. A question of the temperature of the blood, my boy; it doesn't concern the head."

"It's not that I'm—bloodless," he answered, gravely, "simply that I wish to see the right of the thing. I don't intend to be carried away by rash sentimentality."

Rash he surely was not: for weeks and weeks he came to me almost daily, to argue the ethics of war, until I revolted. I called him morbid, unwholesome, abnormal, said he was unfit, couldn't adjust himself to an actual world. That shut him up. He had

nothing to say in his own defence. He kept his ethical doubts to himself for some time.

In the end I suppose he came to some general conclusion satisfactory to himself, for he no longer questioned the war. He said that we must win it, at any cost. And then, of course, came the personal problem. Ought he to enlist?

He discussed that with me, candidly. Could he serve his country better by remaining at home and pursuing his profession, for which he had been preparing for years and years, or by going to fight? I let him talk; he never asked for advice, and wouldn't have got it anyway. It was certainly not for me to argue for or against the indispensability of lawyers.

I could see that he was very much distressed, and he caused me no little distress, too, for he came to my office in season and out of season, sitting patiently in the outer room until I had time for him.

It disturbed me beyond measure to know he was waiting there, with his problems. He had always plenty of cases to cite—things he had read—about conscientious objectors. *Were* they conscientious? he wanted to know. And only sons, fathers of dependent families, and so on, who were prompt to enlist, were they ethically justified in so doing?

"The question is," he insisted earnestly, "how can one serve one's country best?"

"The country may thank its fate that all its men aren't so squeamish," I said.

"Squeamish!" he repeated, hurt and surprised. "I don't think it's that."

"That and the other complaint of your generation," I went on. "A strained anxiety to stand out from the herd. I'll wager you'll decide on the unpopular course as the ethical one, just because it is unpopular."

"You're wrong," he assured me, solemnly, "altogether wrong. Simply, I don't care to be swayed by enthusiasm instead of guided by reason."

"*I'd* go," I said, "if I weren't too old to be taken."

"Ah!" said he, "but, you see, you *are* too old. You haven't any problem. It's been settled *for* you."

In the due course of time he solved his problem, decided that, ethically, he ought to volunteer, did so, and was accepted. Evidently that relieved him; he seemed even cheerful in a sober way.

He went through his training well enough. I had postcards from him now and then, and I gained an impression of him, solemnly busy and as friendless as ever.

Then he was sent to the front, and came to say good-bye to me. In his uniform, lean and stiff, with the air of sober satisfaction, he had a sort of Cromwellian look about him. A good fighter, I fancied he would be, inclined toward fanaticism.

I felt sorry for him; not afraid so much that he would be killed or wounded, but that his orderly and inquiring young mind would be overwhelmed by what he was to see. He would find it very difficult, I thought, to discover what was the ethical course to pursue, and when he had found it, he would no longer be free to follow it.

It is so very rarely that we can watch people change. They live and live; nothing happens; external events harass without compelling, nothing occurs furious enough to compel a soul. People grow a little, intensify, become more and more themselves. Thus, in the usual course of events, would Nicholson become more Nicholson; I expected nothing different. Unless his soul were to be maimed or stupefied in that inferno to which he had gone.

II

I HEARD from him now and then, post-cards, to thank me for tobacco and papers, quite impersonal things which gave me no sort of clue as to what the war was doing to him. I thought of him often enough, and not without anxiety; I imagined painful ethical struggles.

As soon as he got his first home leave, he came directly to me, walked into my office and sat down, quite in the old way to wait until I wasn't busy.

No evolution there. He was absolutely unchanged.

Yes, he said, he'd seen some fairly rotten things, but what could you expect? A fellow wasn't a schoolgirl. Yes, the life was pretty crude, but you got used to that. Couldn't say he'd been exactly frightened, but confoundedly nervous and shaky. Glad to be home—poor devil without any sort of home—but it wasn't altogether a bad sort of life out there. He confessed that it was rather a relief to have no ethical decisions to make; you simply did as you were told.

"It's restful," he said, "and yet it isn't demoralizing as it would be if you voluntarily let go."

He was unable to describe this new existence; he told me what he did, but he couldn't convey the flavour. And he preferred to talk about home affairs, the ethics of conscription, of hoarding, of rationing. He thought a great deal about such things, he said.

He went back quite cheerfully. He had an idiotic sort of optimism, of courage, whichever you please. He wasn't resolved to endure anything that might happen; he was simply sure that nothing *could* happen to him.

He wrote once or twice, and then stopped; didn't answer my letters or acknowledge packages sent him. His name was not among the wounded, missing, or killed, and I didn't care to risk annoying him by writing for information. I could only wait with an anxiety a little surprising, for I hadn't realized what a place he held with me. There wasn't a day that winter when I shouldn't have been glad, remarkably glad, to discuss ethics with him.

Suddenly he appeared; came walking into my room at dusk on a wretched April afternoon. It was too dark to see well, but his grave salutation was enough.

"By Jove!" I cried, with the irrational irritation one always feels when there wasn't any cause for worry after all. "What's been the matter? I haven't heard a word . . ."

"I know," he interrupted, sombrely, "I'm sorry. I'm very wet and chilly. Anything to drink. . . ."

I rang for hot water, and lighted the gas. Nicholson had sat down in my particular chair near the fire, but he kept his head averted. There was something strange about him, his voice even. . . .

I hesitated to question him, but while he was swallowing his steaming toddy, I took a good look at him. And I saw that now he was changed, very much changed. He didn't look ill; he was as lean and tough as ever; it was a sort of shadow that lay over his face, a new, grim look of perplexity, as if he faced an ethical problem beyond his comprehension. I had heard and read of the unaccountable ways in which the war affected men's nerves, and I was half inclined to think that he was struggling with one of those sudden attacks of funk.

He was unusually quiet, sat there, glass in hand, looking into the fire. He asked me, politely, if I'd been well; *he* had been, he assured me, never better in his life. The weather over there, though, got on your nerves, rain and mud and cold. He apologized for not having answered my letters.

"And I shouldn't have dropped in on you like this," he said; "it might have been inconvenient, I know. . . . But, to tell you the truth, I didn't expect to see you this time at all. I—I've been in the city almost a week now."

I was disproportionately hurt.

"A love affair, of course," I thought, but he went on.

"You see, I'm here on a—rather wretched business. Have to find a fellow's wife and tell her about his—about how—about his dying."

"One wouldn't expect that to take a week."

"I know, only I can't find her. He gave me the address, but she's not there; never has been. One Hundred and Fourteen Andrew Street, he told

me. I've gone all over the neighbourhood, looked up all the streets with names anything like Andrew—but it's no good."

I was moderately sympathetic.

"Mistaken somewhere, of course," I said, "but she'll have had a notice from the Government by this time, or have read it in the papers."

"Not the details. . . . You see—"

He stopped.

"Perhaps she's better off without the details," I suggested at random, and was surprised at the look he gave me. I shouldn't have been astonished to see him cry. His face was crimson, his eyes full of tears.

"It's not a light matter," he said, passionately, and after a pause, "you see . . . they—it looked as if—they had suspected him of being—that is, not officially, but it was talked of. . . . They said he deserted. . . . He was mentioned as missing."

"He may turn up later."

"No; he's dead."

"How do you know?"

He didn't answer that.

I was uneasy, a little annoyed at something inexplicable in the affair. It was, taking his nature into consideration, entirely consistent that he should feel ethically bound to continue his search for his dead friend's wife. But who was his friend, though? He'd never spoken, never written of any friend. A wrong address, a mysterious friend, a still more mysterious death.

"There's something behind it," I said to myself; "he's done something idiotic."

He broke a long silence.

"I've found another place to try," he said. "A 'Miss' Alice Corbett. Very likely it's 'Mrs.' Alice was her name, you know."

"Have you written yet, or communicated in any way?"

"No," he answered reluctantly, "I thought—perhaps—you'd care to come with me?"

I agreed, but after that he seemed in no hurry to go. He sat by the fire smoking, very silent. It grew quite dark, and I suggested that if we were to go before dinner . . .

"I—I—to tell you the truth," he said, impulsively, "I hate like the devil to do it!"

"A bit harrowing," I admitted, "although she'll certainly have heard of her husband's death long ago. But look here," I added, "don't be—an ethical ass. If there's anything unpleasant you think she *ought* to know, for heaven's sake, keep it to yourself. Leave her in peace, and him."

"It's nothing of that sort!" he said vehemently, "I want to contradict any unfavourable impression she may possibly have got—or ever may get. You see, I want—I *ought*, you know, to let her—to tell her that he died like a hero. She'll simply have read that he's missing."

"How did he die then?"

"Oh! A—a sort of accident. I've thought it all out. I'm going to tell her that the snipers got a friend of his, and that he—he went out alone, against orders, to pot a few Boches, as a sort of revenge, and got his. Died at once. Women will believe anything, won't they?"

My legal experience didn't confirm that idea. I smiled a little.

"She's been very ill," he went on, "she may not be alive now. But if she is, I want—I *ought* to give her what comfort I can. Any sort of lie, if it will help the poor woman."

"But how did he really die?" I insisted.

Nicholson didn't answer. I delayed a moment to turn out the gas, and then followed him to the door. I had my hand on the knob, when his voice sounded abruptly from the darkness of the hall.

"I killed him," he said.

III

It was exactly like a blow, a physical blow. I wanted to sit down and close my eyes, while I recovered.

"An accident," I murmured.

"Come on!" he said, "it's growing late!"

I followed him into the rainy street, and he immediately took my arm.

"I'd better tell you," he said, in a very low voice. "You see—it's almost *too* much—in fact—one can't always decide—alone. I don't know—can't tell—if it's a—a crime . . ."

"Go ahead!" I encouraged him.

After a minute he began, very painstakingly.

"I didn't really notice him even when he first came out. Morose sort of fellow—not popular at all—big, dark, heavy chap with long eyes like a weasel. He didn't try to make any friends, kept to himself as much as he could, and was eternally writing letters home. Very slack, too, always in trouble over his equipment, and so on. It wasn't so much laziness; he simply *couldn't* look decent. You know the sort. Loose kind of figure, always had a—a *blurred* look.

"All of a sudden he began running after me. Without the least encouragement on my part, I can promise you. In fact, I rather disliked him. I got horribly sick of him, hanging about in his skulking way. I couldn't get rid of him, he was at my heels all the time. I couldn't make it out at all; he didn't want to talk, he never asked me questions or told me about himself. He was like one of those stray dogs that follow you, you know. . . . Poor beggar! I was sorry for him, somehow. . . .

"One day he sat down beside me and began telling me in a whisper that he wouldn't stand it any longer, he'd have to go home. Lots of fellows feel like that, though, now and then. I didn't pay much attention, but he caught hold of my sleeve and began to mutter:

"'I *must* go! I *must* go!'

"'What's up?' I asked him.

"He said his wife was ill, very ill. He'd applied for leave and been refused. I told him the reason for that was that there'd probably be an engagement before long.

"'I must go!' he kept on. 'What can I do?'

"'Nothing!' I told him. 'But buck up and be a man. You have to expect this sort of thing, in war time. Damned hard, of course.'

"He began telling me about his wife then, and it was—really, old man, it was—extraordinary. You wouldn't have imagined him capable of it. . . . He—he made you fairly see the poor little woman—only nineteen, she was, and there was a baby coming. She wasn't expected to pull through. I've never been—never cared for a woman like that myself, but I can understand it. It was—really a—a beautiful thing, his devotion. She was all he had, all he cared about. He only wanted to see her, once more, and then get himself killed. He said he had no use for life at all if he lost her.

"The next day he showed me letters, one from the doctor, and one from the girl herself. It was the most pitiful thing. . . . Wanted to see him once more. You could tell that she was afraid to die, although she tried to be plucky. He was almost mad.

"'For God's sake, tell me what to do!' he kept asking me. 'I can't let her die without even saying good-bye to her. Do you think any cause in the world is worth the agony she is suffering?'

"I could understand his point of view, but I couldn't see any way out. There wasn't the slightest chance of his getting leave at that time. All leaves had been stopped, no exceptions, absolutely. Something big in the air. . . .

"I—really, the beastly business—really haunted me. I—it almost seemed as if—it weren't—well, worth it, you know. Made you realize what war did. . . . Anything so damnably cruel—you know—didn't seem so—elevating, after all."

Nicholson was growing incoherent; he saw it, and stopped for a bit.

"But I couldn't help him," he went on at last. "Tried to cheer him up, and all that. He'd shut me up every time. 'Think of it!' he'd shout. 'That poor little girl, dying *alone*. That terror and agony, all alone. If she could only hold

my hand, she says, she wouldn't mind.' Well, you can imagine. . . . I hadn't thought much of that side of the thing before—the women at home, you know. . . . He was really a bit off—raved, absolutely. But you could understand. He told me all about her, what a plucky little soul she'd been. I wish I could make you see him; you could understand the thing so much better. Big, hulking, stupid sort of ass, quite isolated, no one liked him, men or officers. A rotten bad soldier, altogether out of place. No energy, no alertness. He *couldn't* be trained. And I imagine he'd been the same sort of failure in civil life. There was only this girl. *She'd* seen something good and—lovable in him, something no one else would ever see."

He stopped again.

"If I could only make you see—a little," he continued earnestly. "I'd like you to understand it *all*, if possible. . . .

"It was one afternoon when I'd been sent to a farmhouse—sort of headquarters back of the lines, with a message, and he came running after me. Said he'd got permission to come along. He was out of breath at first, and I suppose the dust choked him; he held on to my arm and stumbled along without a word for half a mile. Then he said:

"'You've got to do it!'

"'What?' I asked him.

"'You're a first-class shot,' he whispered. 'Shoot me!'

"I was shocked.

"'You want me to kill you?' I said. 'You're mad!'

"'No, not that. But a wound, in the arm, just enough . . . so I can get home before it's too late.'

"I shook him off, swore at him, I think. I called him a coward, everything. But he stumbled along beside me, telling me I'd have to do it.

"He made me read another letter he'd got. . . . He was crying—tears running down his dirty face, and gasping and sobbing. . . .

"I give you my word, you've no idea how that sort of thing upsets you. Then he—actually got down on his knees. . . . I was disgusted with him—but—awfully sorry for him. In the end I said I'd do it.

"I went on to deliver my message, and told him to wait for me near a marsh I had to cross. . . . I don't know, to this minute, old man, whether I was right or wrong in consenting. Whether humanity isn't after all a higher—"

"Never mind ethics!" I interrupted. "Let's hear what you did."

He went on.

"When I came back it was growing dark, and I wanted to put it off. I couldn't see properly. But he wouldn't wait.

"It was a very lonely place—that marsh—with a sort of plank walk across it that made a short cut from one part of the high road to the other; saved almost half a mile. We could have seen anyone coming, a long way off, in that flat country. We stopped there and talked it over. We were going to put it down to snipers. He'd thought out a whole story, very plausible. He showed me the exact spot to be hit on his arm, and he tied a white handkerchief over it, so that I shouldn't miss it in the dusk.

"He was to stand on the high road, where he could see anyone coming along the road behind me, and I was to go a few paces along the plank walk over the marsh, where I could see the road to the trenches. I tried even then to argue with him. I pointed out that the thing might easily be discovered and we'd both be court-martialled. But he said he'd risk that, and that I'd already promised. So—!

"'I'll hold out my arm,' he told me. 'And don't fire too near; there mustn't be any powder burns.'

"My hand wasn't steady; I warned him of that, but he said he didn't care. He was quite cool, all his hysteria gone. He was simply anxious to get it over.

"'Come on!' he kept urging. 'It's growing dark!' and it was. I could see the white handkerchief plainly enough, but the dusty road looked like a blur,

and there was a sort of mist over the marsh. It's such a flat country, you know, it—somehow seems lonelier than the mountains. . . .

"There he stood, with his arms stretched out. I couldn't see his face any longer.

"'Quick!' he said. And I fired.

"I don't know how I did it. . . . I didn't realize at first that I'd missed; I thought it was all right. I called out to ask him, but he didn't answer. He came running forward in a queer, blind way, along the plank bridge toward me. Then all of a sudden he stumbled and fell like a log into the marsh.

"I ran up and got him by the collar, and tried to pull him out, but he was a dead weight. . . . I must have got him through the lung, I think. He . . . he made an awful sound. . . .

"After a bit I got his head and shoulders on the boards, but his legs were sunk deep in the swamp. Anyway it didn't matter; in a minute he was dead.

"I let him slip back and he disappeared in the mud. I went on alone. No one asked me about him. . . .

"That's all," he added abruptly.

IV

His story was finished; he had nothing further to say.

He fell silent, an aloof sort of silence which invited no comment. He wished evidently to meditate on this lamentable history; perhaps he was seeking in it some justification for himself, or for that other fellow.

I am not, I dare say, very different from the mass of mankind; any sort of misfortune irritates me. And while at heart I was sorry for him and for his victim, and for the poor woman, I was not just then conscious of any such emotion. I rebelled against our errand.

"And you're going to tell his wife that he died a hero?" I asked. "It's monstrous, farcical."

"No," he answered. "I've thought it all out. It's the only atonement I can make."

One had to admire his courage in facing this woman, under the circumstances. There was something in his ethics, after all! I strode along beside him through the rainy streets, resentfully respectful.

We reached the house; he walked briskly up the steps, rang the bell, waited, rang again.

"I hope it isn't too late," he whispered.

Immediately I had a picture of the unhappy girl lying dead, somewhere in that dark and silent house, or perhaps dying, weak and gasping, at this instant. He didn't grasp at this straw as I should have done, as a chance of relief from an intolerable situation; no, he really wanted to see her, to tell her his flaming lie, to "atone," as he put it, for his horrible error.

At last the door opened.

"Well!" said a woman's voice, good-humouredly.

Nicholson asked for "Mrs. Frank Corbett."

"I suppose you mean me, sir," she answered. "Step in, please."

And we followed her down a passage to a musty little sitting-room. She turned up the gas.

"Sit down, please, gentlemen," she said, and herself remained standing in the doorway, looking at us anxiously.

She was an angular, middle-aged woman with a severe face and luminous, patient eyes, one of those faces seen only among the poor, expressing such limitless endurance. Not resistance, not resignation, simply endurance, like a rock on which all the storms beat.

"I'm trying to find Mrs. Frank Corbett," Nicholson explained. "I'm afraid it's another mistake. I'm sorry we've troubled you—"

"If it's news about Frank—Francis William Corbett, in the Blank regiment," she said, "I'm his sister. And . . . I got that notice—long ago."

She was struggling painfully to keep back her tears while she addressed herself to Nicholson's uniform. "If it's a —a last message, gentlemen, I'm the

one that's entitled to hear it. I'm his sister, and his next of kin."

"But I've a—a personal message for his wife," said Nicholson, gently.

"He never had a wife," she answered. "I'm the next of kin, sir. I'm really entitled to—the message. . . ."

She had begun to weep quietly.

"Frank never had a wife," she repeated. "Never anyone in the world but me. If there's any news, gentlemen, I've a right to hear it. Me and no one else. Missing—that's all they've told me. . . ."

"I'm afraid," said Nicholson, gravely, "that he must have contracted a marriage unknown to you. I've seen letters from his wife—"

The woman shook her head.

"Not *my* Frank. Not Francis William Corbett in the Blank regiment. Not *him*, sir."

And she took a photograph from the chimney piece and held it out to Nicholson. He stared at it with shocked eyes.

"That's he . . . I'm sorry—very sorry. But in war time—extenuating circumstances . . ." he murmured. "No doubt it was a very hasty marriage—"

"He *couldn't* have been married," she insisted. "Why, he lived in this very house all his life; he never stopped out a single night, nor hardly ever missed a meal. Don't you think *I'd* have *known?* And him and me . . ."

She wiped her eyes roughly.

"And what's more, he never made more than two pounds a week, and he gave it all to me, except it might be two or three shillings he'd keep out."

We were silent. She waited, then went on:

"I've made up my mind to losing him. This 'missing,' it's the worst of all. I know he's dead, or I'd have heard more. Only, it would do one good to know a bit about it—how it happened. . . . And that's what you came for, isn't it, sir? That you were going to tell his wife, only he hadn't one?"

"Yes," said Nicholson solemnly. "He died a hero."

She was extraordinarily pleased.

"Ah!" she cried. "A hero, was he? Poor Frank!"

Nicholson plunged into his story. He had evidently rehearsed it well, for he was so fluent as to be almost unconvincing; very circumstantial, vivid, a tale of reckless bravery and a memorable death.

"Of course this is unofficial, you know. He'd disobeyed orders so—they couldn't give him any recognition. But I—as his friend—he had mentioned a wife—"

Miss Corbett shook her head and wiped her eyes again.

"I can't think however *that* got about. Poor Frank! A regular hero . . and me—all the time! It goes to show how easy it is to misjudge others. . . Poor Frank! I'm sure I never expected it of him."

Her tears began to flow again, and she pressed her handkerchief against her mouth.

"Oh, gentlemen!" she cried, "I feel—I've been cruel—and now it's too late . . . ! I can't make it up to him, never, never!"

"I'm very sorry," said Nicholson, feebly, "very sorry. I thought—you see—"

"Oh, I'm glad enough to hear about it!" she interrupted, "and it'll be a comfort to me my life long, that I can be *proud* of him. But I'd misjudged him so!

"He never was—what you'd call a hero. Always nervous and timid like. Wouldn't take his own part when the other boys'd badger him. You see, gentlemen, I brought him up from a baby . . . and it's so easy to misjudge them you know too well. . . . I'd been fighting that—weakness in him for so many years—

"And when the war came, it seemed he was hanging back. Mrs. Cooke's boy from the next door, he enlisted, and my cousins, too, and the young man from 61—a fair dozen from this street. I was sort of ashamed, Frank being so strong. I was at him day and night. 'Don't you want to serve your King and your country? Where's your man-

hood?' And he'd put me off, and say he wanted time to think it over.

"Then, one afternoon, he went to Uncle Gibbs's. Their second boy was leaving the next day, and they had wine. Frank wasn't used to it. It must have gone to his head, like, and all the talk about the army. . . . Anyhow, he came home late, red as a lobster and talking very loud. 'Well,' he says, 'I've done it! I've enlisted!'

"He went through his training, right enough, and started off to the front as jolly as you please. Told me that he liked the life. But as soon as ever he got out there, he wrote me a letter. 'It's—' excuse me, gentlemen, 'it's hell,' he wrote. 'I'll lose my mind. I can't stand it. Make an excuse,' he says, 'Write that you're very sick so I can get leave.'

"Well, after a bit, I did, and he came home. He was in a terrible way, so nervous he couldn't sleep nor eat. He owned up, frank enough, that he wanted to desert. But I wouldn't give him any peace. I frightened and I shamed him into going back. 'You'll be caught sure enough and shot,' I told him. 'Isn't that better,' says he, 'than having your—your insides torn out by shrapnel, or half your face shot off?'

"And I—you see, I didn't understand then—I called him a coward and—well, he went back. But he was soon writing again. 'Get me home somehow, for God's sake! Get me home, or I'll go mad!' I wrote him I couldn't and wouldn't if I could. 'Stick it out like a man,' I says. Then one more letter from him—fair crazy, it was—and I never heard again."

She looked at us with solemn, tearful eyes.

"And he must have made up his mind to make the best of it after all," she added. "It all goes to show you never can tell what's in a man. Poor Frank a hero!"

Once again she dried her eyes, and turned to Nicholson.

"It'd be a great comfort to me if you'd kindly tell it all to me again, sir," she said. "You did make it seem so beautiful!"

The poor fellow turned quite pale. I was really sorry for him, having to tell that yarn again, knowing what he knew now. He did it, splendidly, though, and we rose to take our leave.

The poor woman pressed Nicholson's hand fervently.

"Thank you, sir! Thank you!" she said, and had no words to express anything more.

But her luminous, patient eyes told her gratitude, her consolation, her sorrowful, remorseful pride in her hero brother.

V

We were out in the rain again, going home, at a terrific pace set by my ethical young friend. He was silent. I tried to be, but couldn't!

"So there wasn't any wife!" I said, with a sort of malice.

"No," he answered sombrely. "It seems there wasn't. No; I was—deceived, I suppose."

"You were!" I assured him, "A lie, the letters, and the pathos, and the devotion, all of it. A preposterous lie, invented by a coward to get himself away from the trenches, to save his own precious skin. But a not very successful device, was it, considering how it ended?"

Nicholson walked on, a bit more slowly.

"Well," he said, after a very long pause, "it's a very difficult problem. . . . But—do you know . . . I'm damned glad I killed the poor devil. . . ."

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By Leslie Nelson Jennings

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Better the Joy that dances
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ABOUT FASHIONS AND OTHER THINGS

By Mary Pitcairn

Our last exertion is to get suitably equipped for the country-house party or the seaside, which follows the general exodus after Goodwood, and then we may rest happily in or out of our clothes for a bit. Out of clothes and into bathing kit is perhaps the happiest change of all, and fascinating indeed are some of the new bathing models, especially in the matter of taffetas designs—and oh, what numbers of these there are! Nearly every one boasts a skirt of some sort, though, needless to say, of the most abbreviated description; but the shortness with regard to length does not affect the fulness nor the wonderful variety in the matter of design. Perhaps the most unusual are the scalloped arrangements that are made like overlapping petals, and when parted by breeze or billow show under petals, as it were, of some vividly contrasting colour, black and orange, bottle-green and flame, being among the favourite schemes. A variation that follows on the lines of the pierrette costumes seen at recent fancy-dress balls has knickers so enormous that they have all the effect of a short skirt, till one notices their sudden turn inwards to clasp closely the knees.

Another novelty is the bathing suit of silk stockinette, in navy blue or black, and of course absolutely skin-tight. Over it goes a sleeveless jumper of gaily patterned georgette, laced up the sides in so open a manner that the undergarment is distinctly visible. When the idea is reversed, so that the jumper is on the darker side and the undergarment almost flesh-tint, the effect is daring to say the least of it! As a matter of fact, one suspects that many of the new bathing creations are never intended to enter the water, so elaborately are they thought out; but the last-mentioned would certainly do equally well for beach or actual bathing, since the jumper part can be removed for swimming, and slipped on again for the sun-drying process. The favourite beach-wrap is of the burnous persuasion, and quite easily made at home from one long length of material. Bath towelling is still the most popular fabric for its expression when a very rough type of sponge-cloth is not used, and for pattern stripes of the widest and brightest are most in demand. The variety of rubber caps is seemingly endless, some of them being very ornate and combining several colours; but the headdress that is most universally becoming is the spotted waterproof satin handkerchief that can be tied around the wearer's head according to individual taste.

In these days of permanent hair-waving it is not, of course, so necessary completely to cover the head when bathing, while those who prefer to go without head-covering all through the vacation may welcome the news of a new supplement for locks that have been bobbed and are now undergoing the tiresome process of regrowth into an ordinary length coiffure. One of our leading hairdressing experts has invented a fascinating rouleau of naturally waving curls which, clasping around the nape of the neck, mingle with all those endy bits that are so difficult to control at this neither-one-thing-nor-the-other stage in the "de-bobbing" proceedings. A plait of hair crossing the brows helps to keep the curls in place; or, if preferred, a coloured ribbon can be used, this being changeable at will. This invention is really the handiest thing, and will certainly save much time and temper, while it is just as comfortable to wear under a hat as without.

Talking of hats, by-the-by, a well-known sports house has recently made great strides with regard to waterproof millinery. No one would guess, for instance, that a charming satin model of the smartest build and with contrasting under-brim had been specially treated to withstand quite heavy rain. The old weatherproof hat, besides generally failing in its avowed purpose, was such a dire affair that one felt compelled to take out an umbrella if only to hide it a bit, but the new models look just as delightful after a downright soaking as on sunny days.

The same firm, too, is exploiting many novelties in suède and soft kid coats for the motoring or moorland holiday. One of the most satisfactory models consists of a brown suède coat,

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UNIQUE PROCESS FOR RETAINING AND REGAINING BEAUTY.

By Mlle. Charlotte Sirier.

Does your skin chap or roughen easily, or become unduly red or blotchy? Let me tell you a quick and easy way to overcome the trouble and keep your complexion beautifully white, smooth, and soft. Just get some ordinary mercolized wax at the chemist's, and use a little before retiring as you would use cold cream. The wax, through some peculiar action, flecks off the rough, discoloured, or blemished skin. The worn-out cuticle comes off just like dandruff on a diseased scalp, only in almost invisible particles. Mercolized wax simply hastens Nature's work, which is the rational and proper way to obtain a perfect complexion, so much sought after, but very seldom seen. The process is perfectly simple and quite harmless.

* * * * *

It is astounding the number of women who suffer from unsightly growths of hair on the face, and it will come as a piece of good news to know that there is a simple substance, known as powdered pheminol, which will remove it immediately and permanently. Mix a small quantity into a thin paste with a little water, and apply to the objectionable growths. In two minutes all trace of the hair will have entirely vanished, and your skin will be soft and smooth as a child's.

* * * * *

The hair should be allowed to breathe, and the greasy film around each strand must be removed with a mild, non-alkaline shampoo. Soaps should be tabooed. The very best solution for the purpose can be made by dissolving a teaspoonful of stallax granules in a cup of hot water. It stimulates the scalp to a healthy action, and at the same time leaves the hair in that soft, fluffy condition so much admired. Any chemist can supply you with an original packet of stallax, sufficient to make twenty-five or thirty shampoos.

* * * * *

One need not resort to the very questionable expedient of hair-dye in order not to have grey hair. The grey hair can easily be changed back to a natural colour in a few days' time merely by the application of a simple, old-fashioned, and perfectly harmless home-made lotion. Procure from your chemist two ounces of tammalite concentrate, and mix it with three ounces of bay rum. Apply this to the hair a few times with a small sponge, and you will soon have the pleasure of seeing your grey hair gradually darkening to the desired shade. The lotion is pleasant, not sticky or greasy, and does not injure the hair in any way.

belted and pocketed in true sportswoman fashion, though not too obtrusively, and combined with a skirt of rough tweed in checks of dark brown and pale coffee tint. A hat of the last named, of brown suède, or of brown and coffee waterproofed satin, should supply the finishing touch.

It is to be hoped that the grouse and other moorland wild things will not be unduly scared by some of the latest tweeds, so very vivid and so very wide are the stripes in some of the new patterns. One really eye-aching arrangement consisted of alternating bars, two inches wide, in rose-pink and a kind of dull mustard yellow. So trying was it that one turned with relief to a suit in cinnamon brown with lines of cream; while another in the same material combined cinnamon and iron-rust red for one of the big cloaks that include a waistcoat as part of the scheme, the new season's note being struck by buttons of tortoiseshell.

Talking of cloaks, and especially the filmy variety mentioned in the July number, Rosa Lynd's successful show, "The 'Ruined' Lady," is the medium for three delightful examples. One, in powder-blue chiffon, tops Vivienne Whitaker's attractive frock of embroidered taffetas dotted with cherries; while Eva Moore's cream lace dress has a similar waist-deep cape of itself that seems almost indivisible from the bodice. In the last act this favourite artiste completes her lovely Chinese jade green gown by a cloak of matching tulle yoked in deep amethyst sequins, with a narrow velvet collar of the last hue. So perfectly are cape and gown designed and blended that, until the former is removed, it is almost impossible to say where one begins and the other leaves off—confirmation of a hint given in an earlier article on evening models for the coming autumn.

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